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Fall 2016

## Framing the Future: Imagining the City Through the Lens of Film

Sofia Zavala Ferreira

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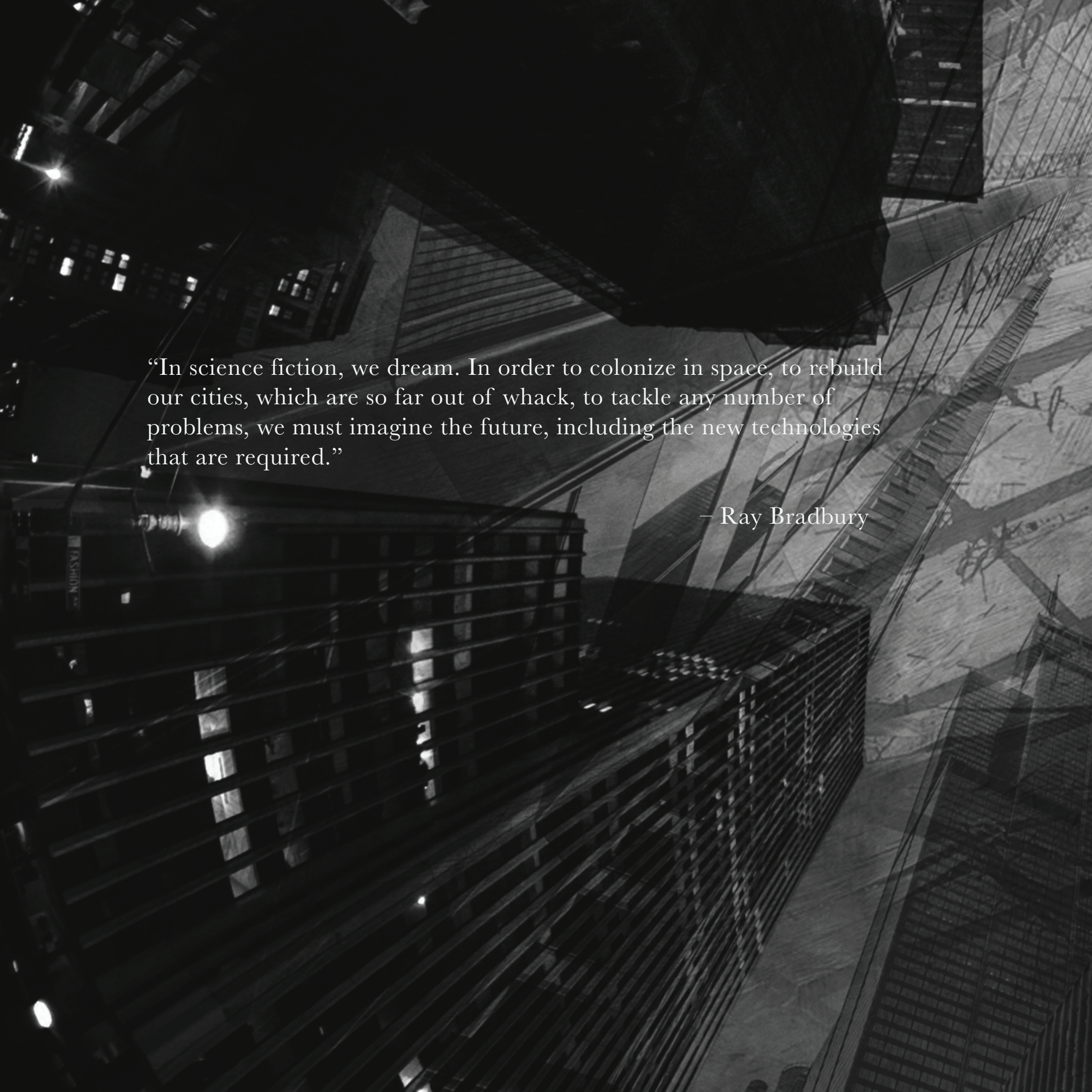
An aerial, high-angle photograph of a city, likely New York City, showing a dense grid of skyscrapers and streets. The image is heavily layered with semi-transparent architectural drawings, including floor plans, site plans, and technical drawings, which are overlaid on the cityscape. The drawings are in various shades of gray and white, creating a complex, multi-layered visual effect. The text is positioned in the upper left quadrant of the image.

ARC 505:THESIS PREP | SOFIA ZAVALA | ADVISOR: IVAN BERNAL

# FRAMING THE FUTURE:

## IMAGINING THE CITY THROUGH THE LENS OF FILM





“In science fiction, we dream. In order to colonize in space, to rebuild our cities, which are so far out of whack, to tackle any number of problems, we must imagine the future, including the new technologies that are required.”

— Ray Bradbury





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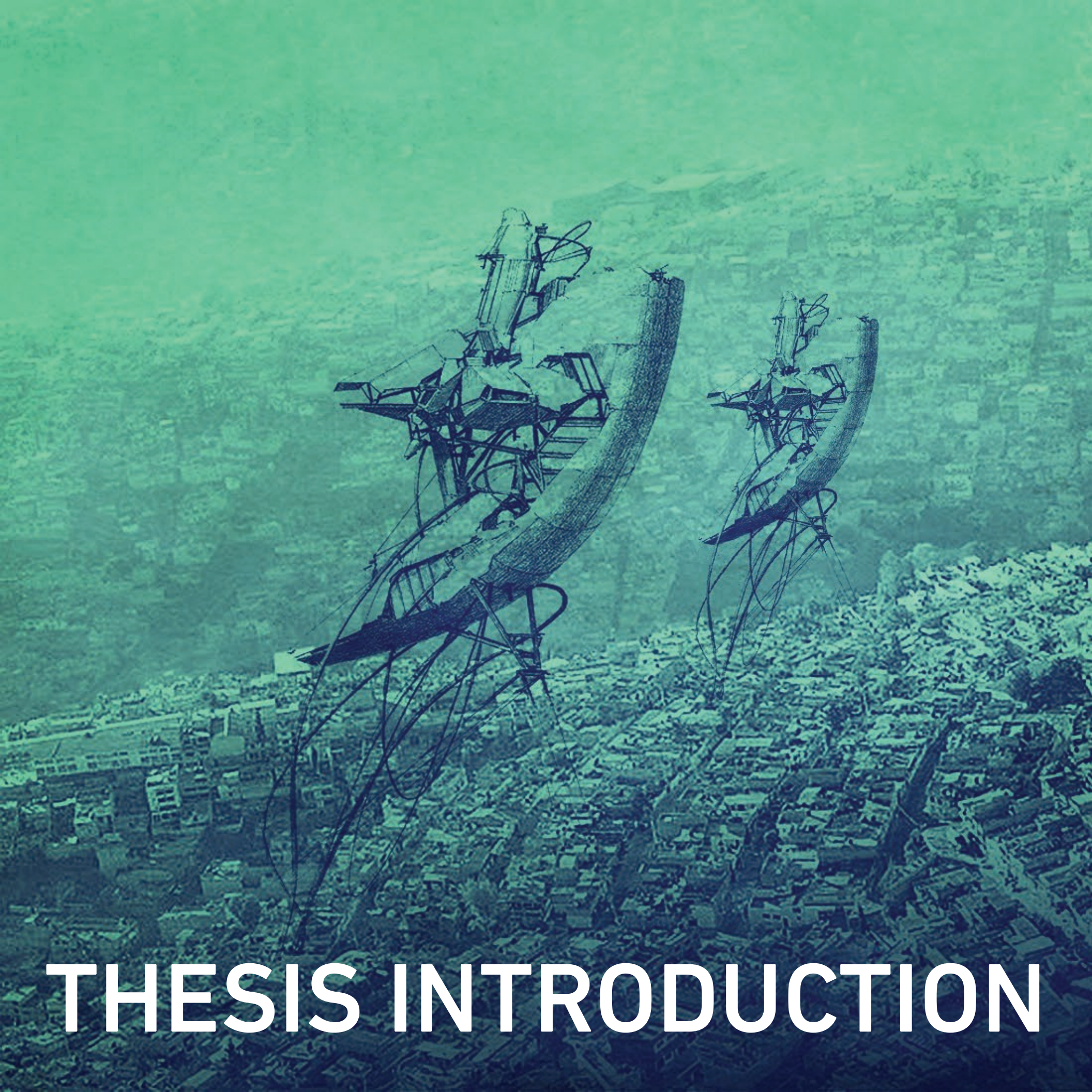
5 THE SCENARIO

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# THESIS INTRODUCTION



An aerial photograph of a city, likely Rio de Janeiro, showing a dense urban landscape with a prominent hillside in the foreground. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter. In the upper right corner, the number '01' is displayed in a large, white, sans-serif font. The number '0' is slightly larger than the '1'. The background shows a mix of residential buildings and greenery, with a large, dark, irregular shape in the foreground that could be a body of water or a large building.

01

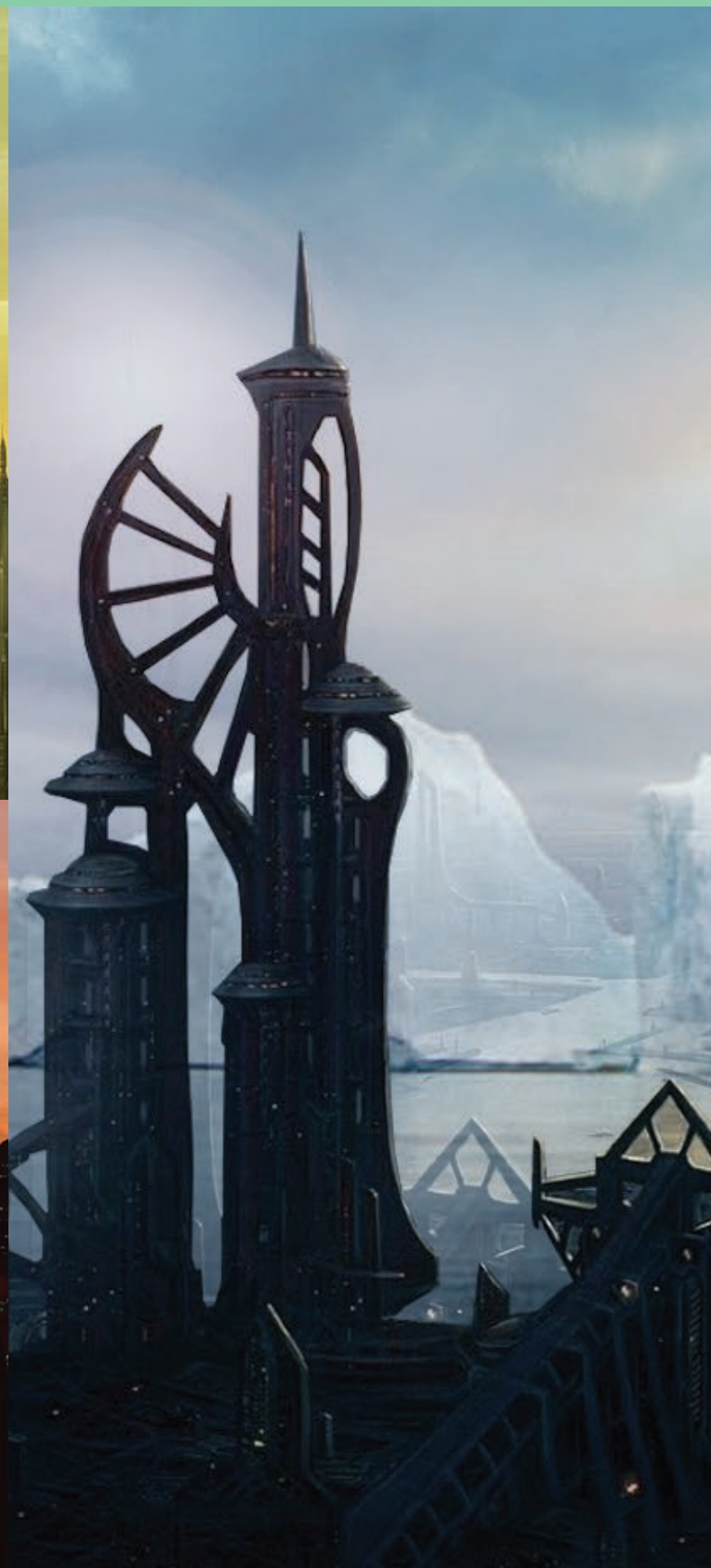


# INTRODUCTION

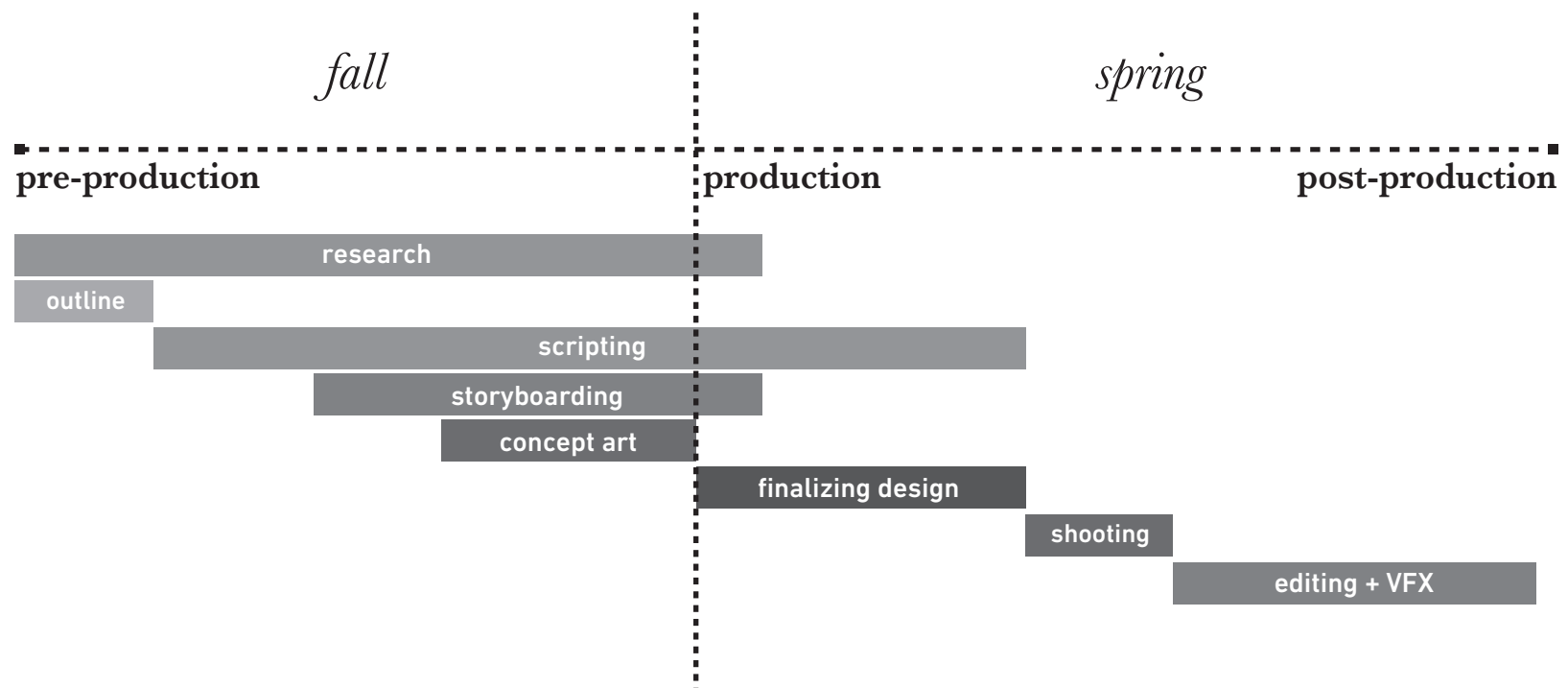
With a great interest in the relationship between film and architecture, this project establishes its subject matter on the possibilities presented in science fiction cinema and speculative design. By extracting attributes from these that would influence design and architectural concerns, a bridge between the disconnected imagined and real, current and future, can be created through the creation of a speculative scenario and a narrative.

It seeks to utilize cinematic design and storytelling conventions to successfully convey the desired atmosphere, architectural realities, and life conditions of a fictional city. By utilizing advanced digital techniques often used in cinema itself, including but not limited to virtual reality, animations, and 3-D renderings, an alternative mode of representation that can be more immersive and experiential for the field can be explored.











# METHODOLOGY

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In order to achieve the goal of bridging the gap between architectural advances and science fiction through film media, a process similar to that of film-making is followed to achieve the end result of a short film that successfully follows and delivers an architectural narrative.

The pre-production phase involves a more architectural approach in terms of research. This part however becomes vital for the final design in conjunction with the creation of a scenario and a narrative, in order to narrow down the criteria required for the production and post production phases in the Spring, which involve materializing the concepts surrounding each factor speculated.





# ARCHITECTURE + FILM



An aerial photograph of a dry, cracked landscape. The ground is covered in a dense network of dark, irregular cracks, creating a complex, textured pattern. In the lower-left foreground, there is a large, dark, irregularly shaped object that appears to be a pile of debris or a large rock. The overall color palette is dominated by dark, muted tones, with some lighter areas where the cracks are more pronounced.

# 02



# CINEMARCHITECTURE

Film is one of the most pervasive and accessible media forms of the 21st century. The ability of film technologies to realistically represent the possibilities of an architecturally and environmentally dystopic (or utopic) future, is just one of the many ways that this important medium can impact thinking about the design of current and future environments. Film has the ability to convincingly ask: “what if?”.

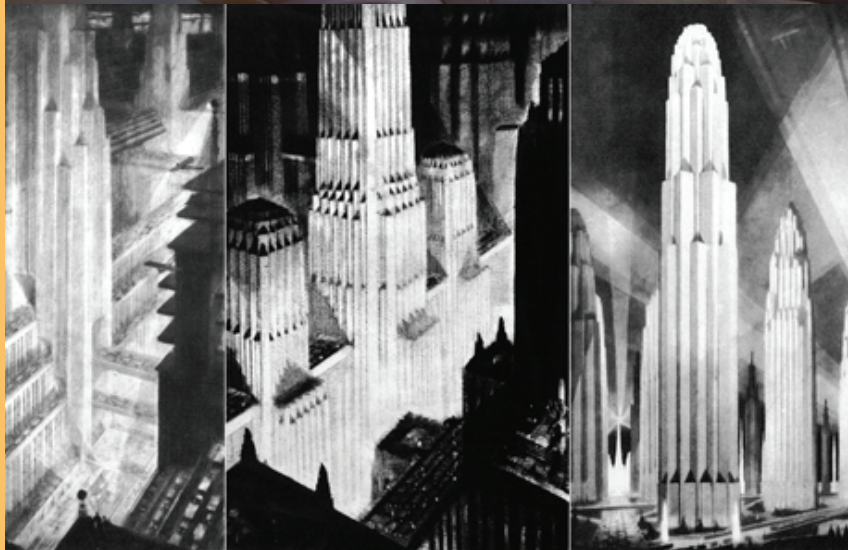
What is interesting in the use of film in teaching architectural lessons, is the ability of the media to provide increased understanding of the experiential nature of spaces and ideas that have been trapped in 2-D media, even if based on works of fiction rather than fact.

For the purpose of this thesis, films that represent a future or alternative city strictly in live-action movies, will be analyzed to create a series of design standards. In addition, looking into utopian or futuristic designs by previous architects will be analyzed to extract relevant characteristics and evaluate the successes of each.











# ARCHITECTURE IN FILM

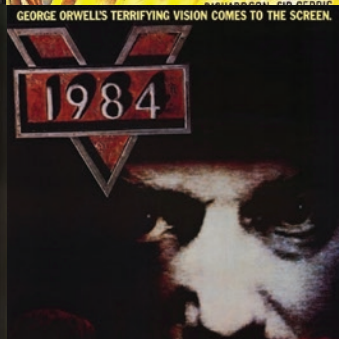
When designing these futuristic cities, concept artists don't necessarily neglect existing architectural conventions and history. Many times, historical architectural references can be identified within this alien or futuristic worlds.

Doug Chiang, chief artist for Star Wars: Episode I – The Phantom Menace (1999) stated in an interview:

"I've found that you should avoid making things up without anchoring them to a strong foundation based in world history. There are many architectural influences in our designs. In order to make this new, futuristic worlds believable, they have to be anchored into reality in some way."

By utilizing familiar languages and visuals in an unfamiliar context, the result is a better ability to connect to the story and its world, and not feel alienated by its unfamiliarity.







# FILMOGRAPHY



Metropolis (1927)

Things to Come (1936)

Logan's Run (1976)

Star Wars (1977)

Star Trek (1979)

Blade Runner (1982)

Nineteen Eighty-four (1984)

Brazil (1985)

Total Recall (1990)

Demolition Man (1993)

The Fifth Element (1997)

Gattaca (1997)

A.I. Artificial Intelligence (2001)

Equilibrium (2002)

Minority Report (2003)

I, Robot (2004)

The Island (2005)

Aeon Flux (2005)

In Time (2011)

Total Recall (2012)

Dredd (2012)

Elysium (2013)

The Giver (2014)

Guardians of the Galaxy (2014)

Tomorrowland (2015)

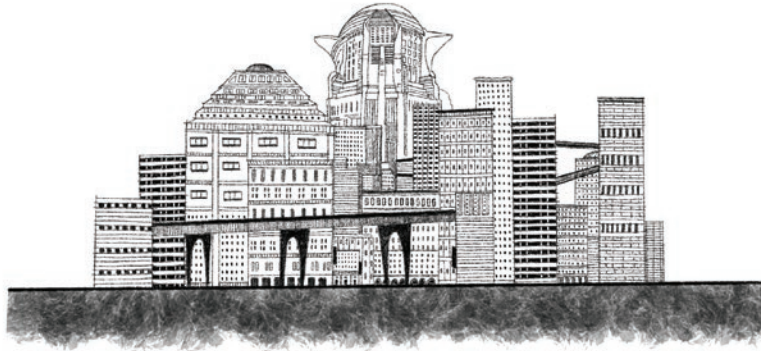
High-Rise (2016)



# FILM ANALYSIS

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## METROPOLIS (1927)



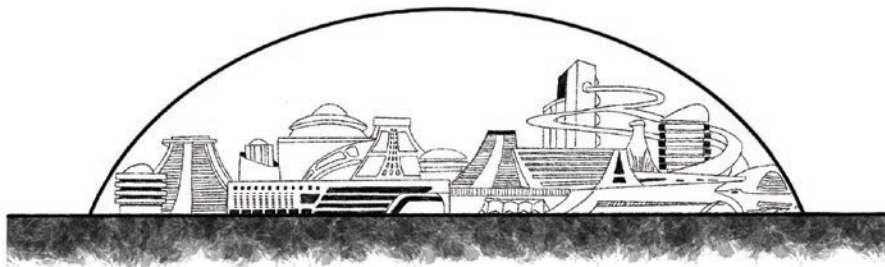
Dir. Fritz Lang | Prod. Design K. Vollbrecht, O. Hunte, E. Kettelhut

## Metropolis 2000

The urban vision of “Metropolis” was seeded by the skyscraper boom in New York City, however to a more frenetic view of density and height. The film shows a future where the city is structured in vertical layers according to the different social strata, with the working class living in the underground. The “New Tower of Babel” serves as the machine heart of a city connected by sky bridges.



## LOGAN'S RUN (1976)



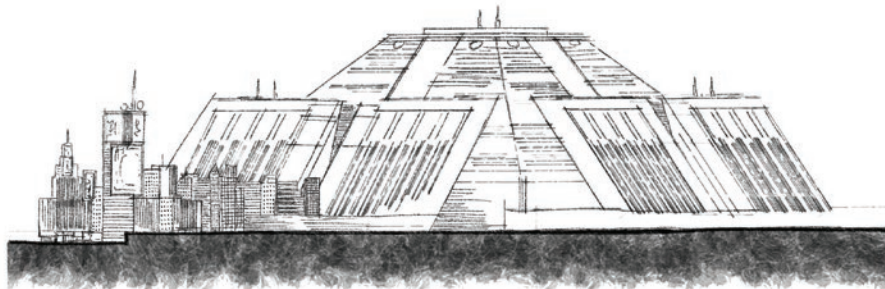
Dir. Michael Anderson | Prod. Design Dale Hennesy

## Earth 2274

The futuristic remnants of human civilization live in a sealed city contained beneath a cluster of geodesic domes, a utopia run by a computer that takes care of all aspects of their life. When the main characters attempt to leave this sealed city, they find that remains of human civilization have become a wilderness. Overpopulation is a main theme in the film, with population control through mandatory execution at the age of 30, veiled as ‘renewal.’



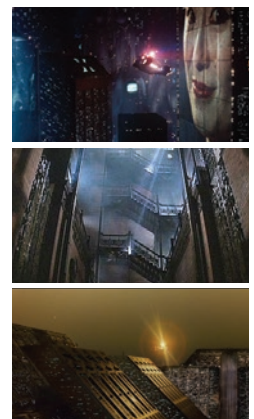
## BLADE RUNNER (1982)



Dir. Ridley Scott | Prod. Design Lawrence G. Paul, Syd Mead

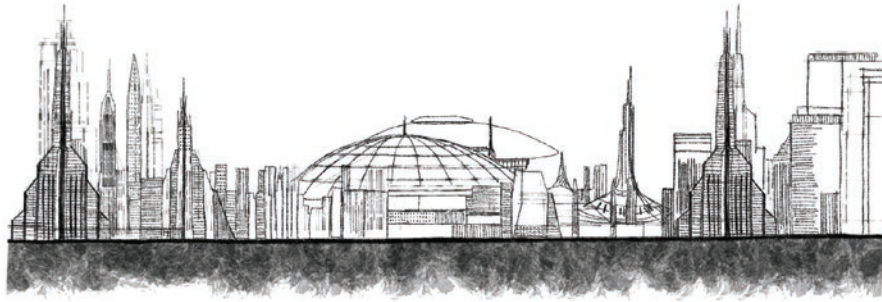
## Los Angeles 2019

This futuristic dystopia is filled with 700-story skyscrapers and the sky glows with industrial smoke, fire and acid rain. The Tyrell Corporation, in charge of the city inhabit massive structures inspired by ziggurats that overlook the city. The city is a one of contradiction; high rises filled with advertisements, pyramids and glass towers intermingle with revival architecture, historical buildings, and the debris of past urban sprawl, which accentuate the chaos of the current society.





## STAR WARS (1997)



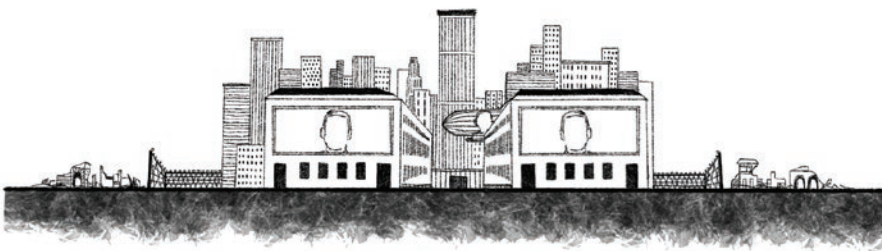
Dir. George Lucas | Prod. Design Norman Reynolds

### Coruscant, a long time ago

The Imperial Center of the Galactic Empire, this planet is presented as one covered with a dense urban landscape. A series of skyscrapers form dense urban blocks with inner levels. Citizens who lived in the upper levels were able to breathe air that was filtered and clean, with sunlight never reaching the ground level. At the center of the radial configuration is the Senate building, which dominates with the Jedi Temple overlooking on the other side.



## EQUILIBRIUM (2002)



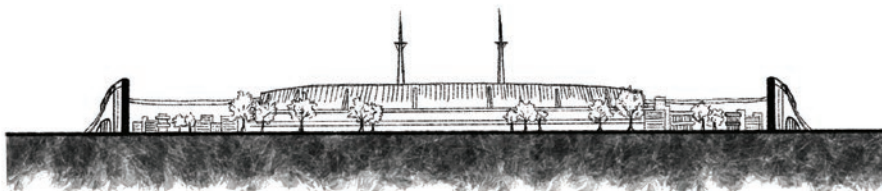
Dir. Kurt Wimmer | Prod. Design Wolf Kroeger

### Libria 2072

The city where all feelings have been suppressed in order to avoid war is represented by minimal, clean architecture with heavy modern and fascist influences. Massive concrete structures used for propaganda surround a highly vertical and grey city. Through the use of symmetry, the oppressiveness nature of the government and society can be understood. Outside the controlled city walls lie the restricted remnants of the old society, referred to only as the Nether.



## AEON FLUX (2005)



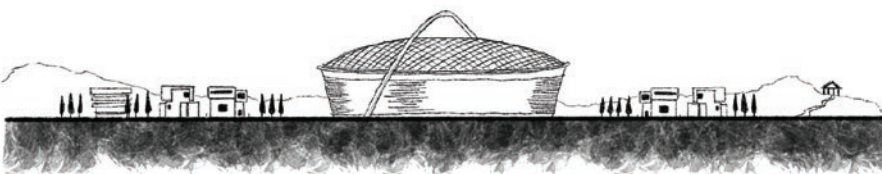
Dir. Karyn Kusama | Prod. Design Andrew McAlpine

### Bregna 2415

In this last surviving city on Earth, ordinary citizens are constantly under surveillance. The modern and contemporary architecture of Berlin was used to represent this futuristic radial city, surrounded by controlled walls which “protect” its citizens from nature. The utopian city turns into a dystopian as the story unfolds, revealing the totalitarian nature of the structures and the government.



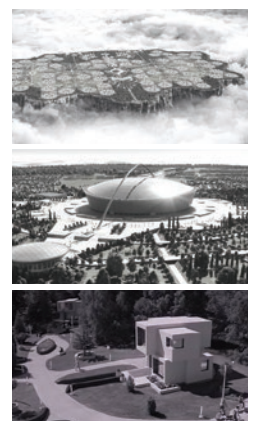
## THE GIVER (2014)



Dir. Phillip Noyce | Prod. Ed Verreaux

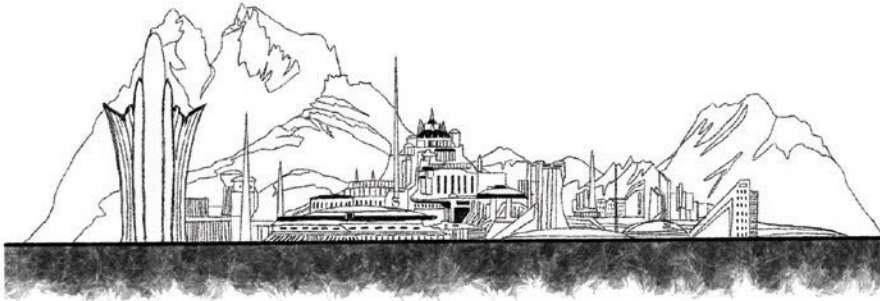
### The Community 2050

Set in a seemingly utopian city, where there is no conflict, no inequality, and no stress. The streets are laid out in a perfectly symmetrical grid, the domiciles and public buildings are clean and the people dress in matching outfits and ride bicycles so as not to pollute the environment. At the center of the highly modern city lies the Odeon, a stadium-like structure used as a meeting place for the citizens of the community.





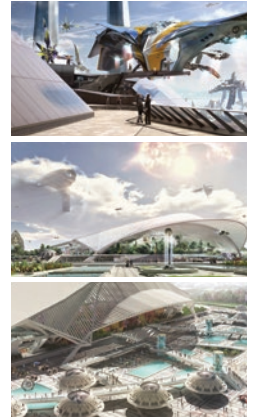
## GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY (2014)



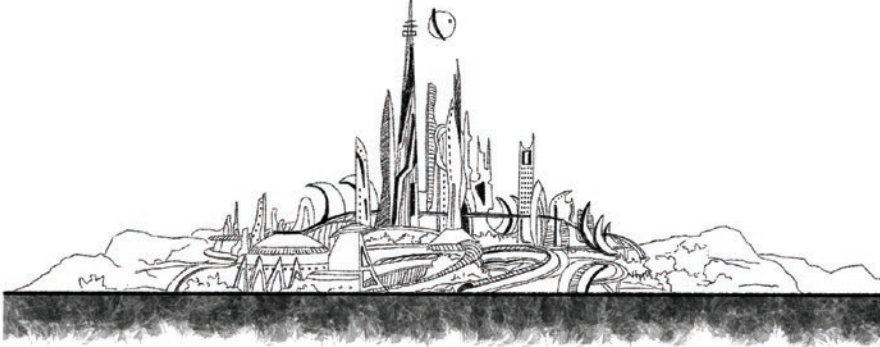
Dir. James Gunn | Prod. Design Charles Wood

### Xandar 2014

Surrounded by primarily white and organic-shaped structures, the utopian planet's bright setting serves as a metaphor for the happy, peaceful planet that it is. Calatrava's work has been cited as the inspiration for the majority of the buildings in the city, in particular the white concrete, steel and glass arch of the Liege train station designed by him in Belgium.



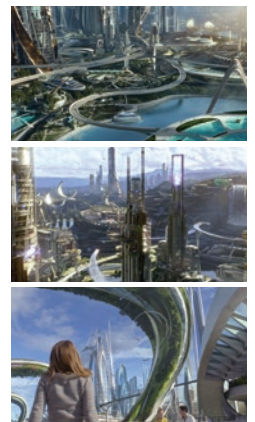
## TOMORROWLAND (2015)



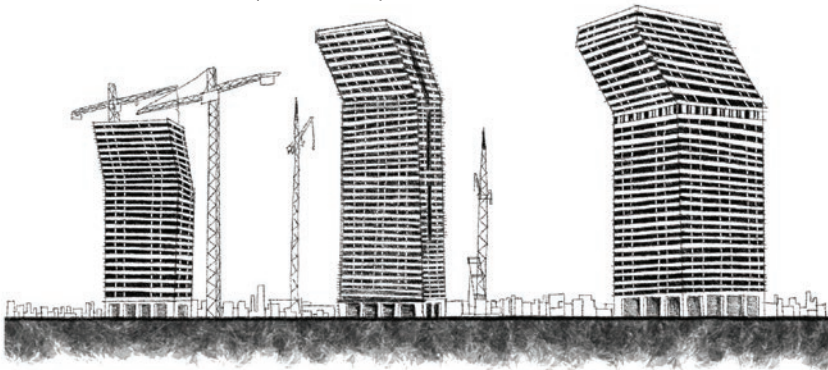
Dir. Brad Bird | Prod. Design Scott Chambliss

### Tomorrowland 1986

The city of Tomorrowland was created "somewhere in time and space" by Gustave Eiffel, Jules Verne and Thomas Edison. The ground level was left entirely for public use, filled with water and green parks. A middle level was added for transportation and circulation, with interconnecting bridges and highways surrounding a highly vertical, organic city. The majority of the city was filmed primarily at Calatrava's City of Arts and Sciences.



## HIGH-RISE (2016)



Dir. Ben Wheatley | Prod. Design Mark Tildesley

### London 2000

A forty story high-rise tower on the outskirts of London, built by an esteemed architect is the epitome of chic, modern living. However, as it is a self-sustaining, highly brutalist tower block, its residents start to go insane after they find no reason to leave the building and start to isolate from the real world. At the top of the building lives the architect, in a contrasting floor designed in a highly vernacular manner, to contrast with the stark, modern and cold designs he provided for the rest of the citizens.











SCIENCE FICTION



03





# SCI-FI AS A GENRE

While there may not be any consensus on what defines the Sci-Fi genre, most films include descriptions which project futuristic design, innovations and machines which are beyond current technological limitations. Whether visions of utopia or dystopia, they are a projection of what may come to pass if current technology and social evolution take a particular path. They provide a believable vision of how the future may turn out to be. As with H.G. Wells title of his 1938 film they describe those "Things to come".

Science fiction in film has inspired generations of scientists to research and develop technologies that could reach what is portrayed as seemingly unreachable. In the same way, architecture can take lessons from these portrayals of cities, whether real or imagined, and develop design parameters for application as new technologies for representation emerge.









tainment



# THE CITY IN SCI-FI

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The vertical cityscape has totally dominated modern science fiction since its inception in the late 19th century, and persistent tropes of the vertical city re-emerge endlessly with the inscription of class and political and social relations into vertical space. The way these presumptive futures are imagined have enormous implications for our contemporary urban life as they inspire contemporary architecture. Adrian Smith from SOM, has said that his inspiration for designing the Burj Khalifa came from watching Wizard of Oz as a child — the Emerald City being these gleaming towers looming high above flat, endless plains.

With real cities like Dubai imitating the fictional landscapes, a closer reality to the dystopian ideas first portrayed on film can be seen, where the elite rule over the working class in man-built vertical cities. With more films now utilizing these as their main sets, their ideals are being falsely exposed as the true future for our cities, while hiding the implications of a completely artificial construction dominated by the elite.

The power of film, then, to raise questions and expose issues with particular urban settings becomes essential for designers, architects, and city planners. What is, really, the future of the city we should aim for?



# CREATING THE SCI-FI-SCAPE



The believability aspect of these imaginary landscapes has only increased with time and the rapid technological advances. While at its early stages, most sci-fi cities had to depend on built sets and backdrops, the ability to now accurately and realistically represent the imaginary and impossible seems to present no limits other than creativity.

With advanced CGI and computer graphics these environments become almost fully tangible by the audience. However, for the purposes of this project, these boundaries are to be pushed even further, attempting to utilize elements like virtual reality and animations to create an architecture that is truly immersive.









RESEARCH





04

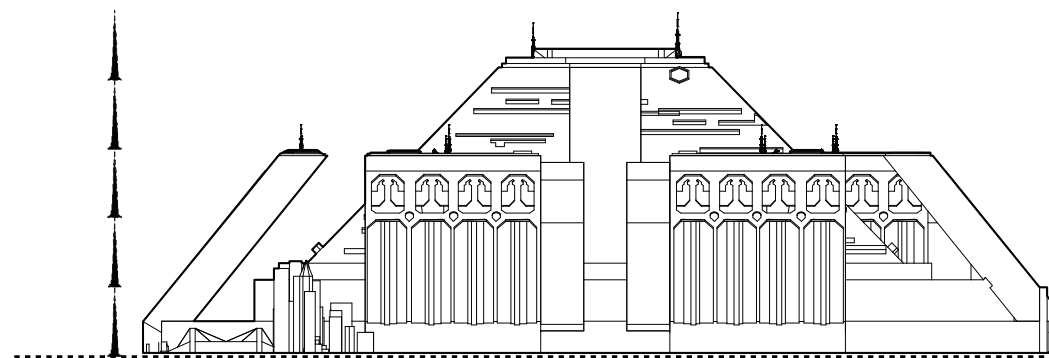


# VERTICALITY | FILM

With the increasing urbanization and number of population in our cities, it is not unusual for verticality to dominate visions of our future, they are already here. It is however, interesting the manner in which the verticality is implied and the relationship to the existing conditions of what was already there.

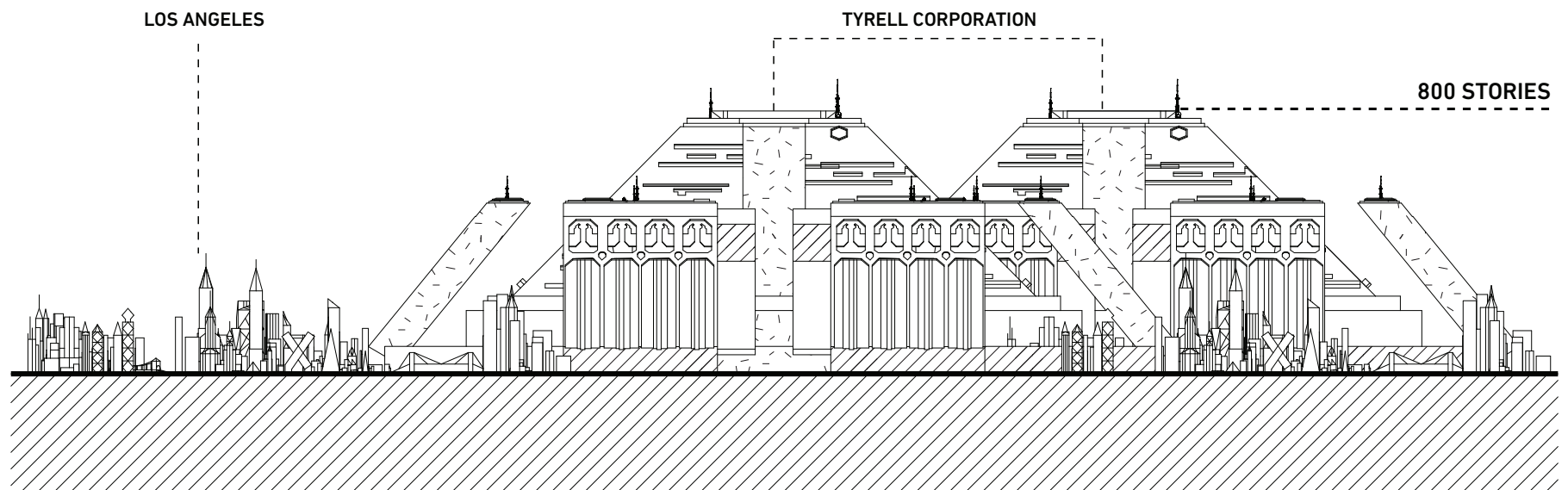
## BLADE RUNNER (1982)

Dir. Ridley Scott



BURJ KHALIFA

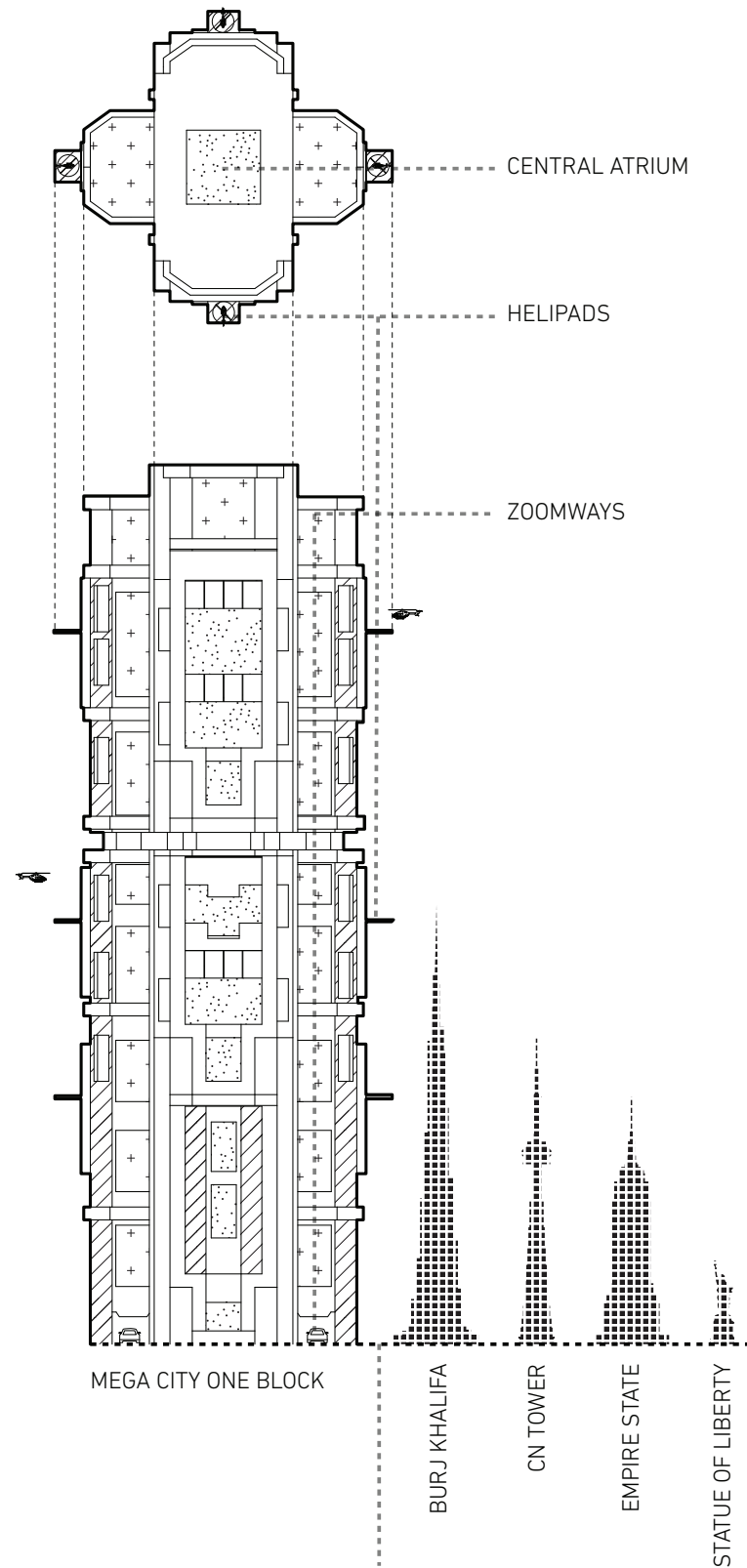
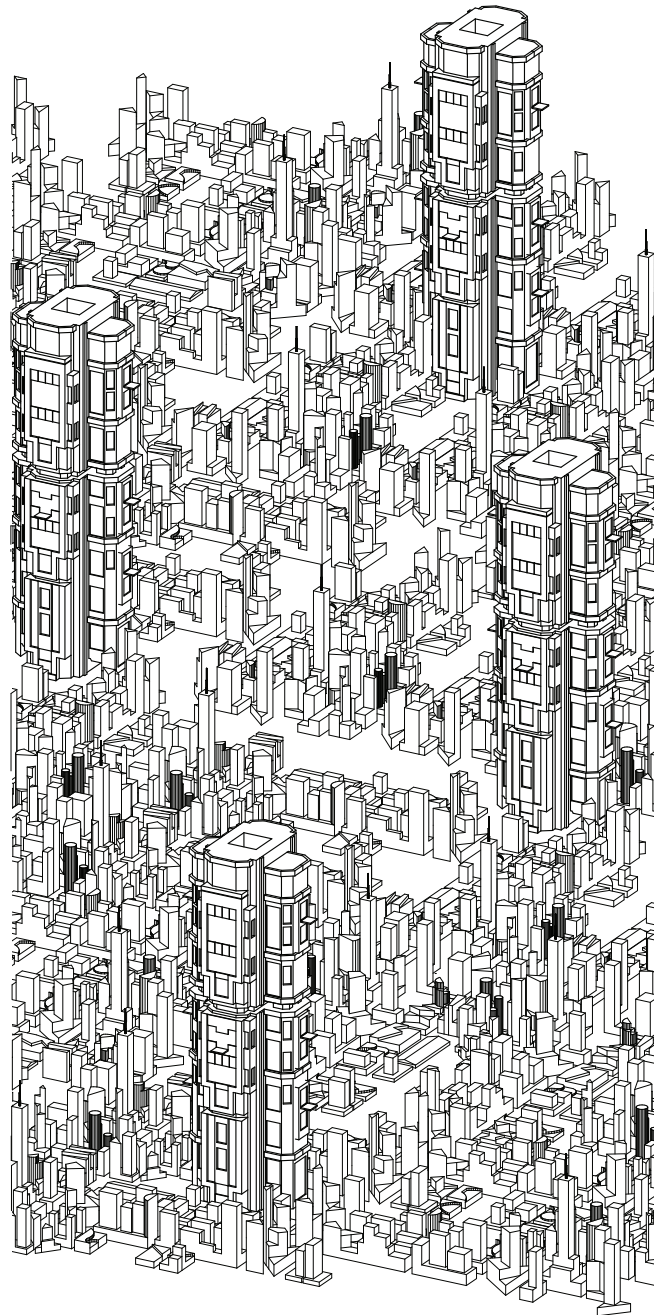
TYRELL CORPORATION





# DREDD (2012)

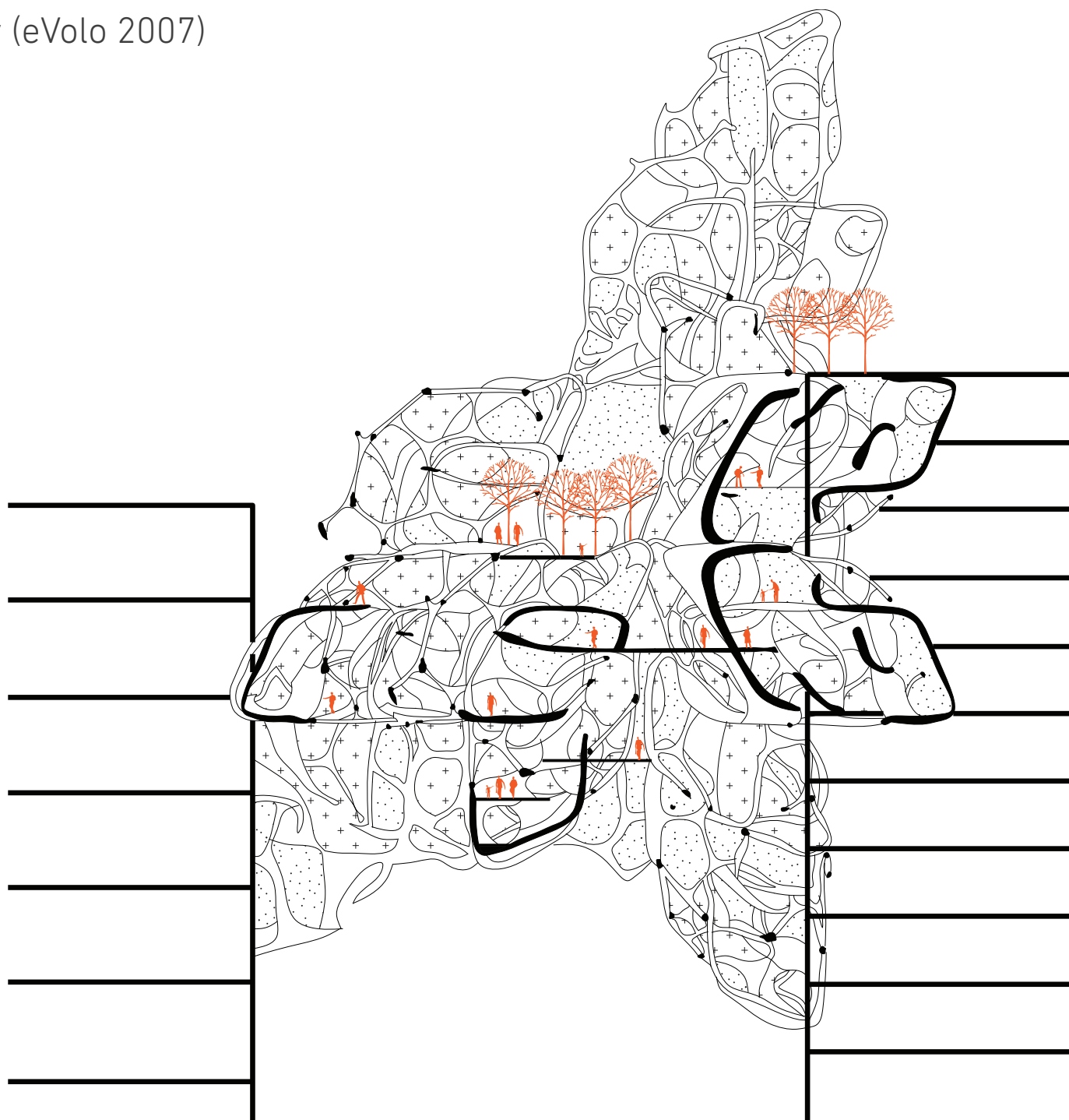
Dir. Pete Travis





# PARA-CITY

S. Ray (eVolo 2007)

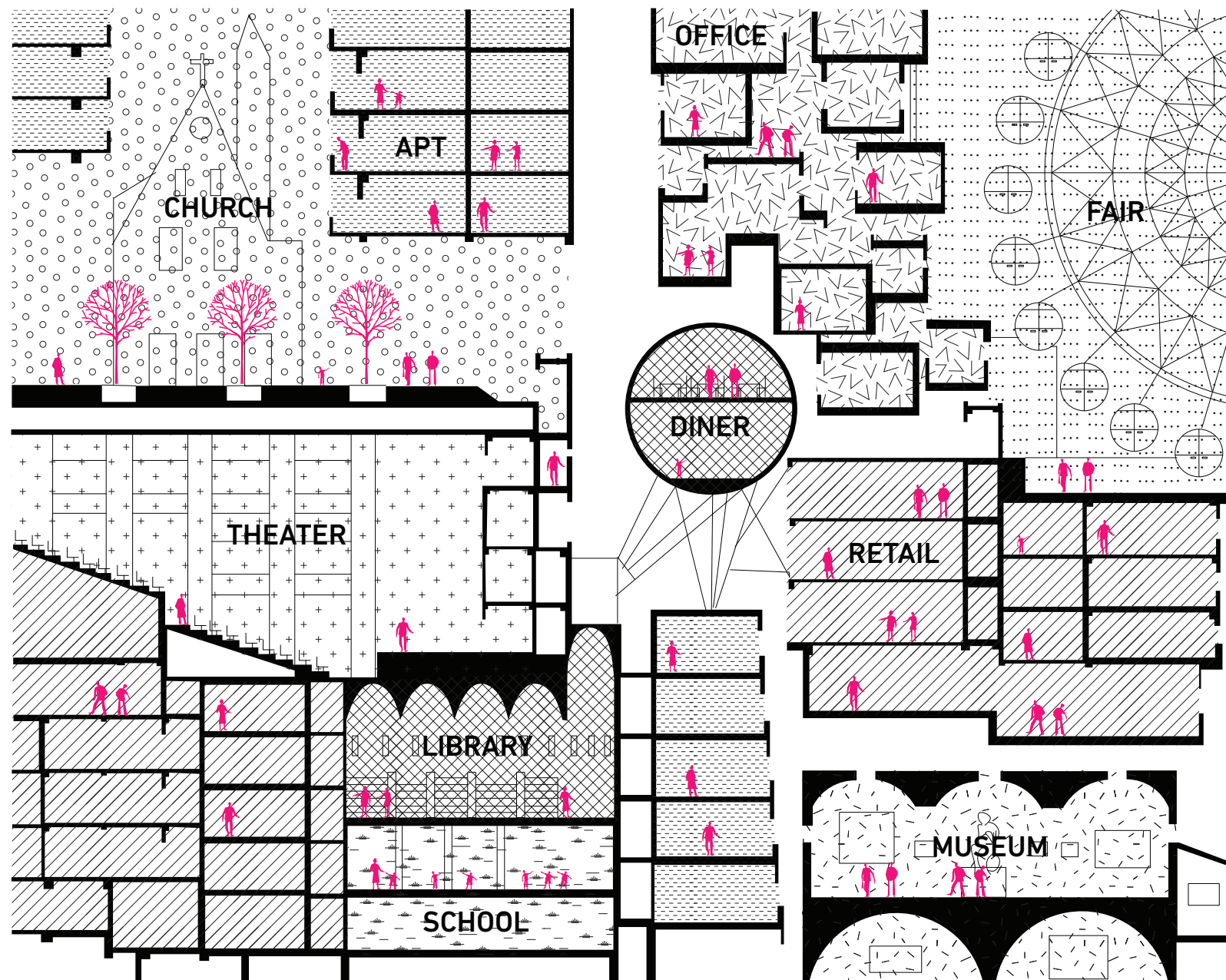




# VERTICALITY | SPECULATIVE

## TAIWAN BABEL

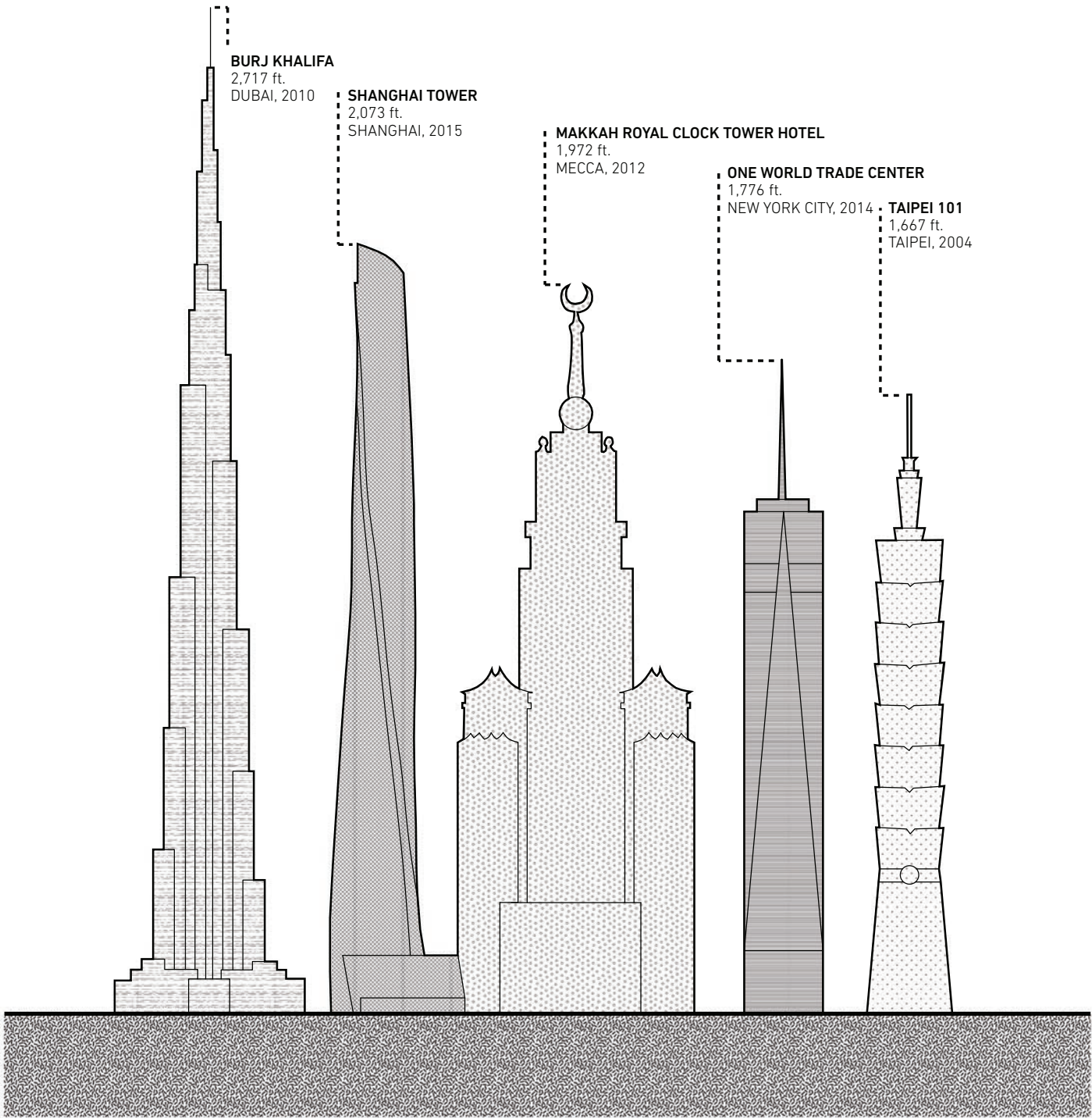
Lu Te Hsin (eVolo 2016)





# VERTICALITY | BUILT ENVIRONMENT

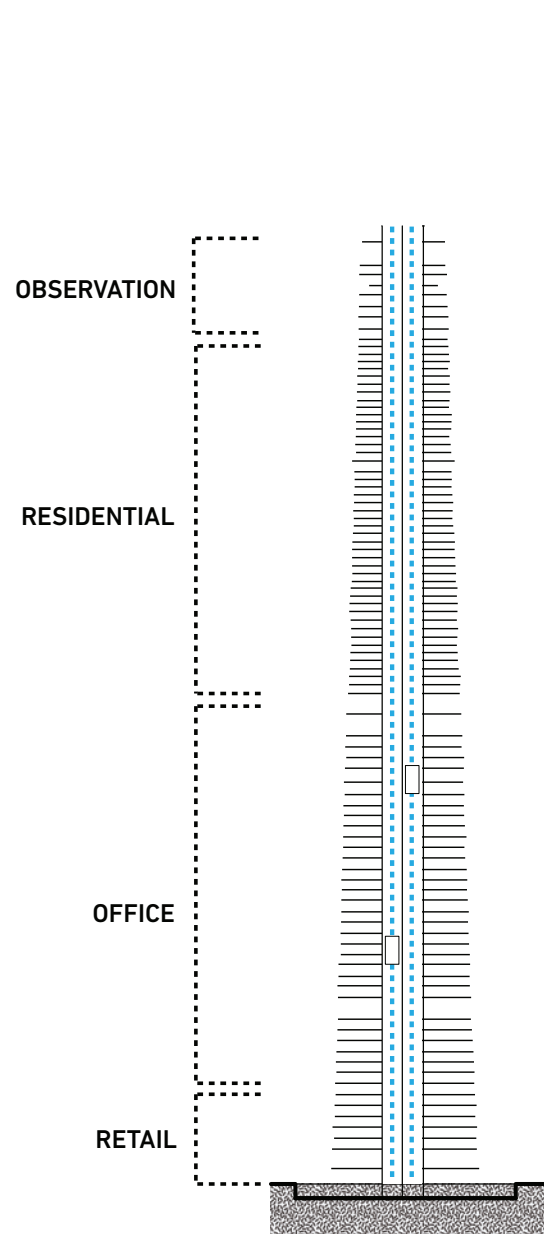
## HIGHEST SKYSCRAPERS IN 2016





## JOHN HANCOCK CENTER

SOM 1969



5 ESCALATORS

50 ELEVATORS

OBSERVATION

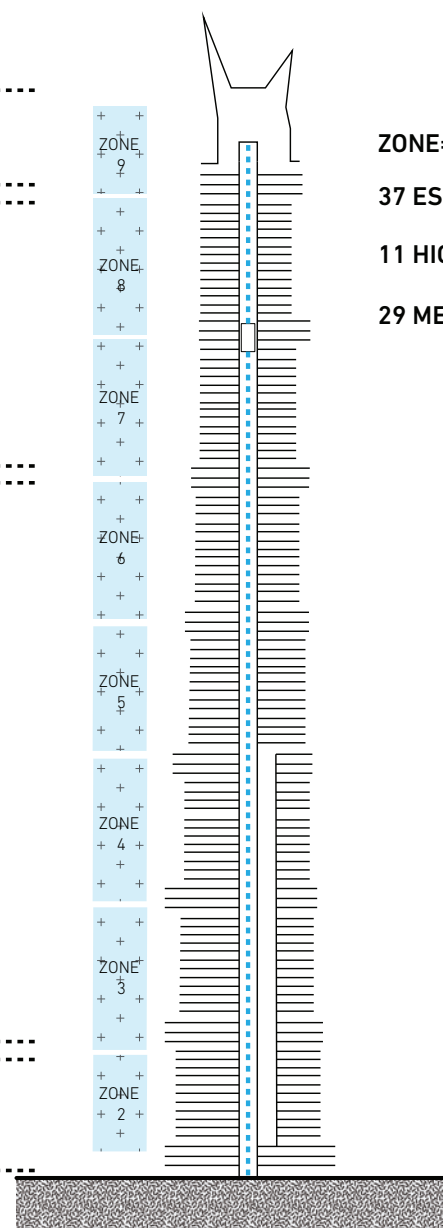
HOTEL

OFFICE

RETAIL  
+  
CONFERENCE

## SHANGHAI TOWER

GENSLER 2015



ZONE=12-15 STORIES

37 ESCALATORS

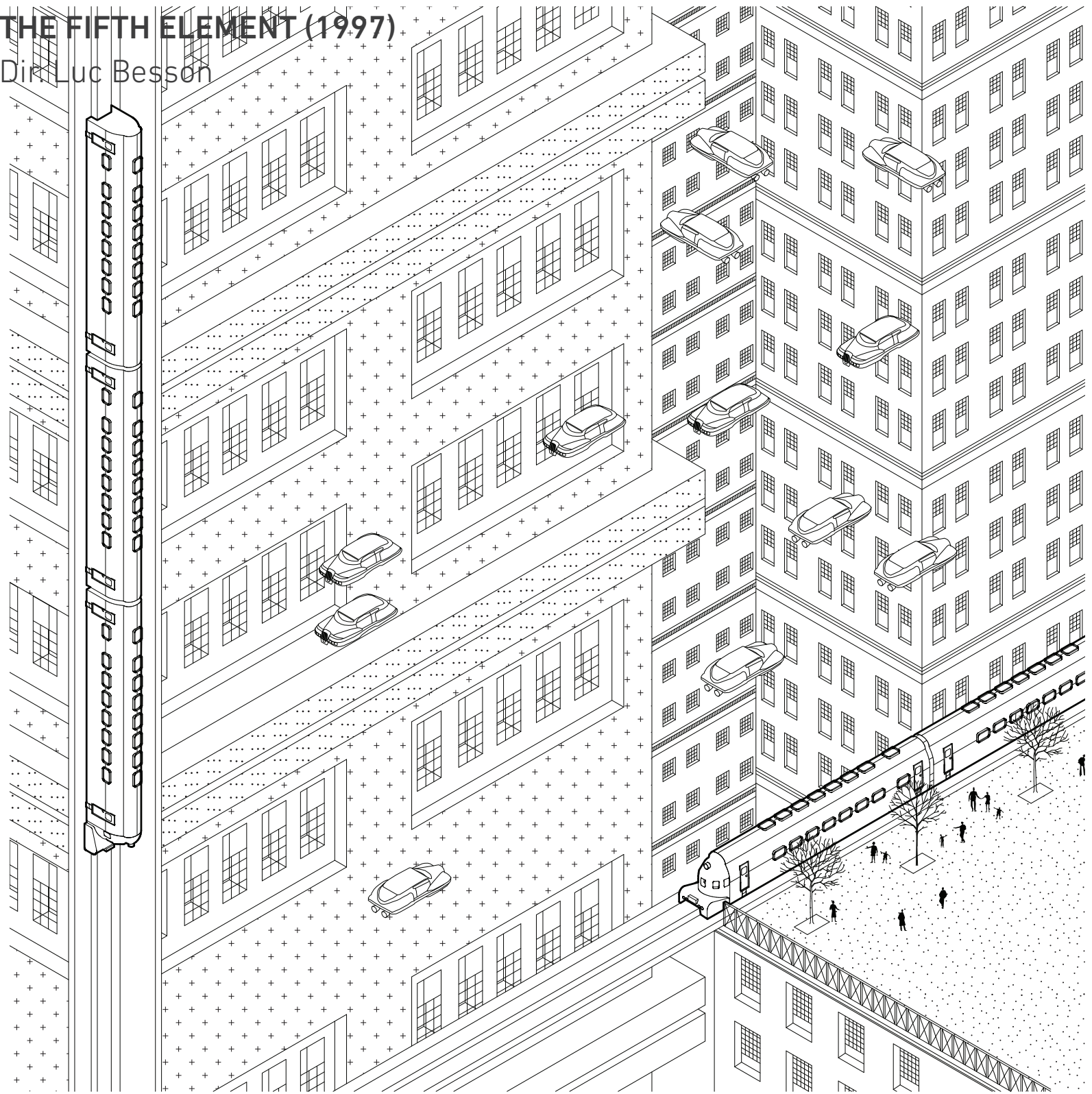
11 HIGH SPEED ELEVATORS

29 MEDIUM SPEED ELEVATORS



# THE FIFTH ELEMENT (1997)

Dir. Luc Besson



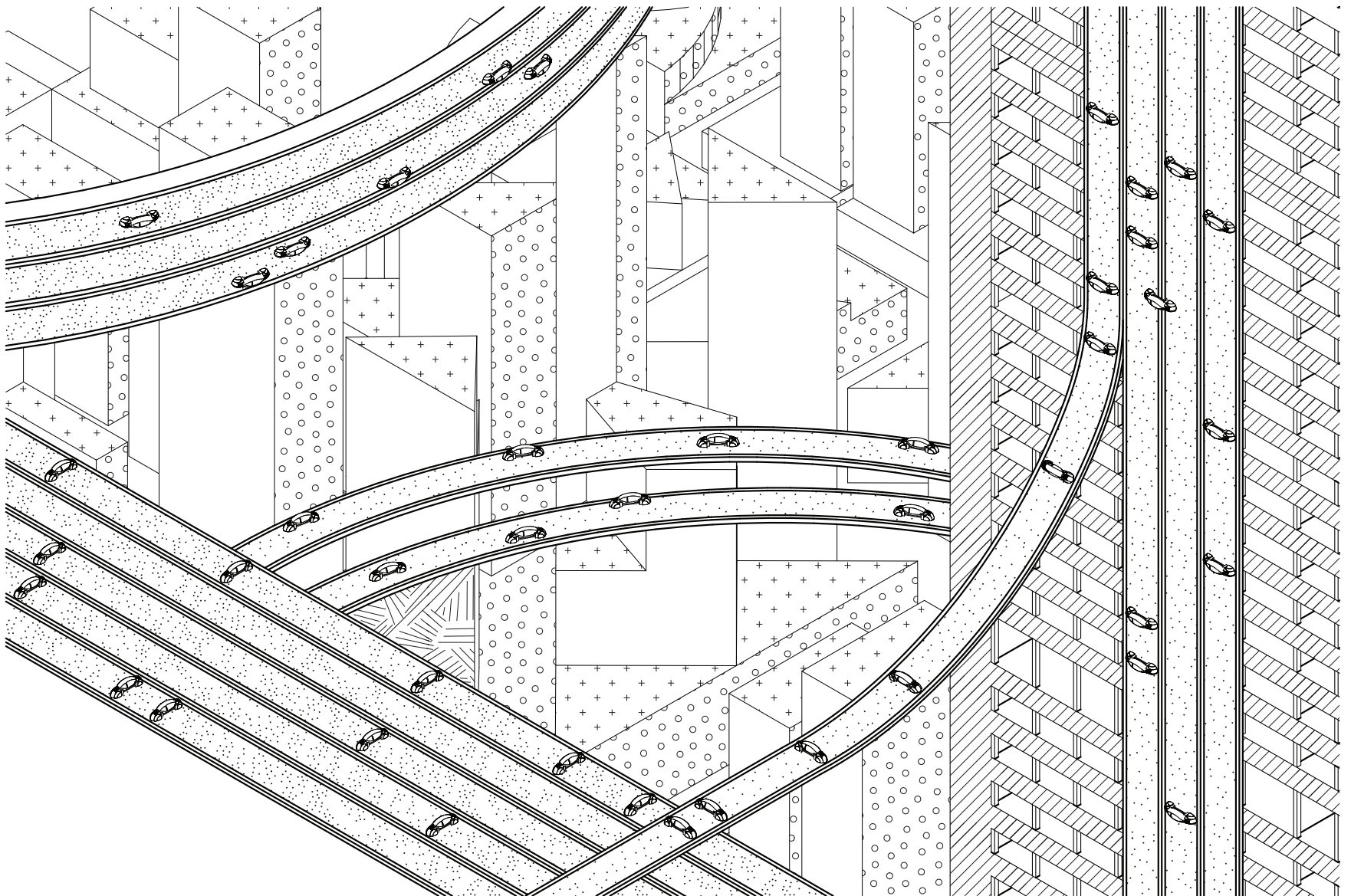


# TRANSPORTATION | FILM

Within an incredibly urbanized and dense environment, circulation throughout has to be clearly thought out. In a future where we build so high up, thinking of a third dimension for integration of easier and efficient transportation becomes vital.

## MINORITY REPORT (2003)

Dir. Steven Spielberg

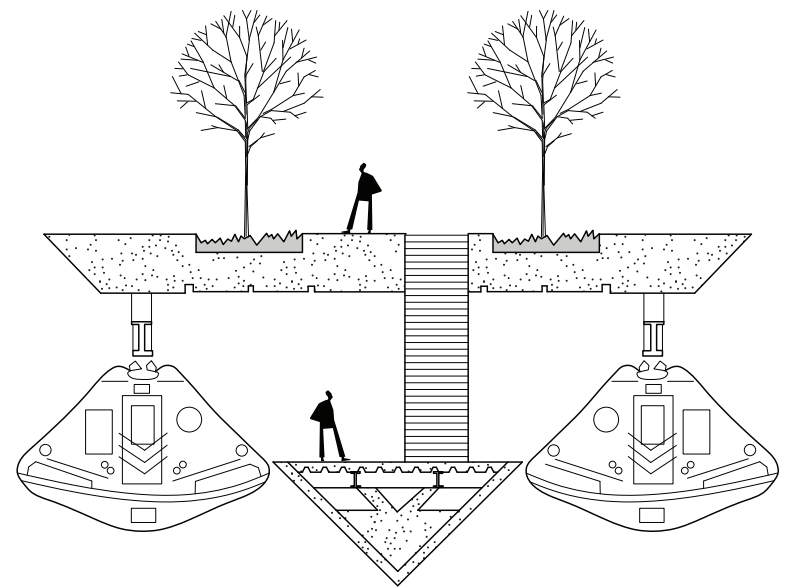
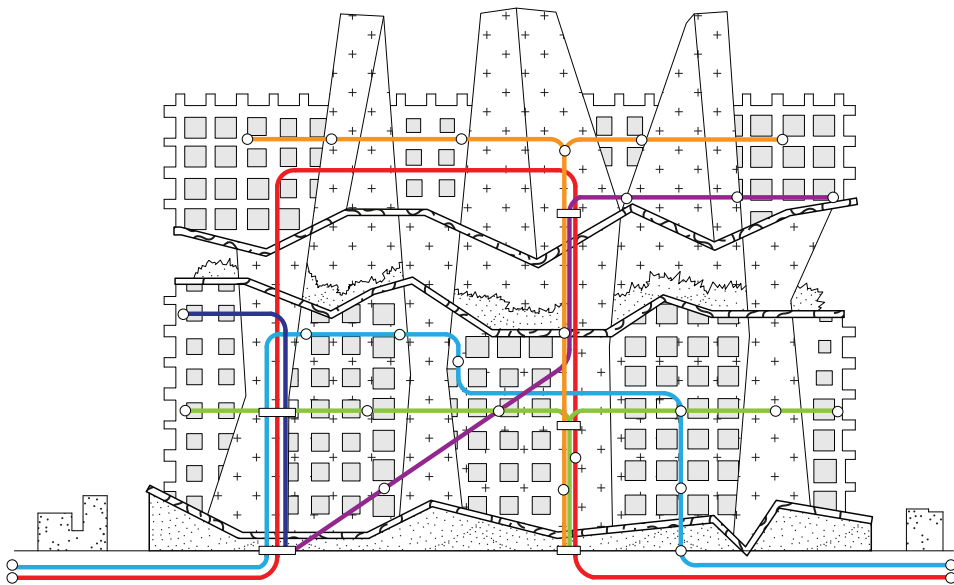




# TRANSPORTATION | SPECULATIVE

## BOROUGH N06.

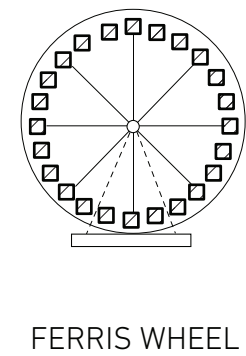
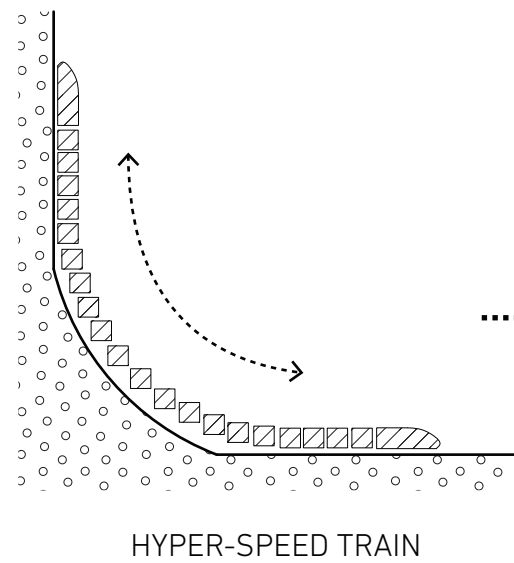
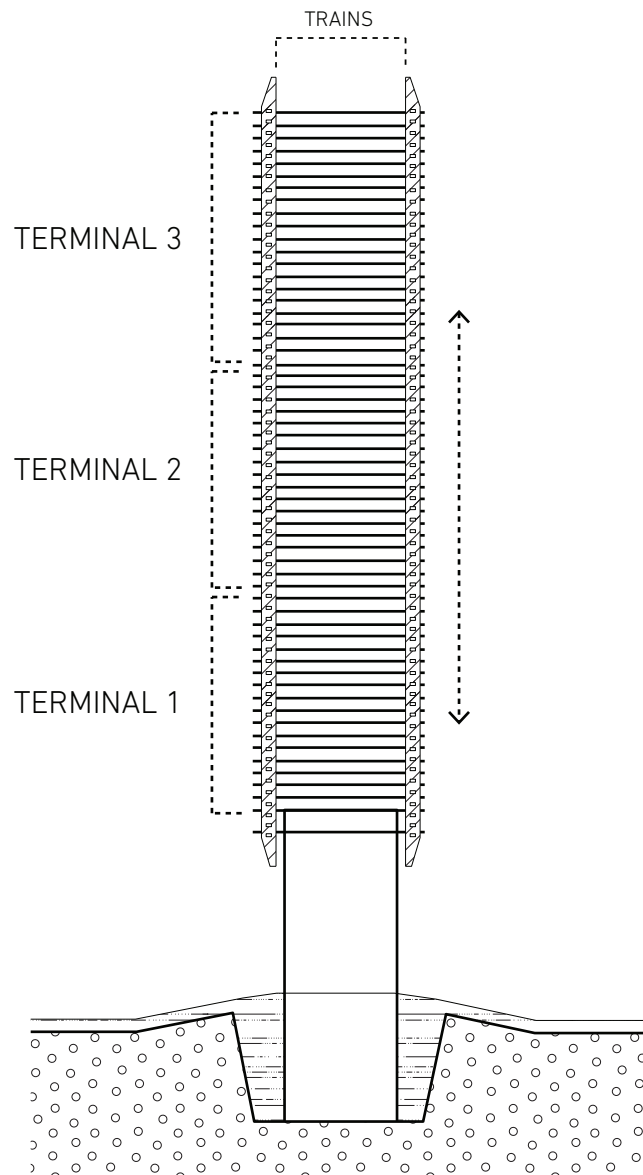
J. Houser (eVolo 2011)





# HYPER-SPEED VERTICAL TRAIN HUB

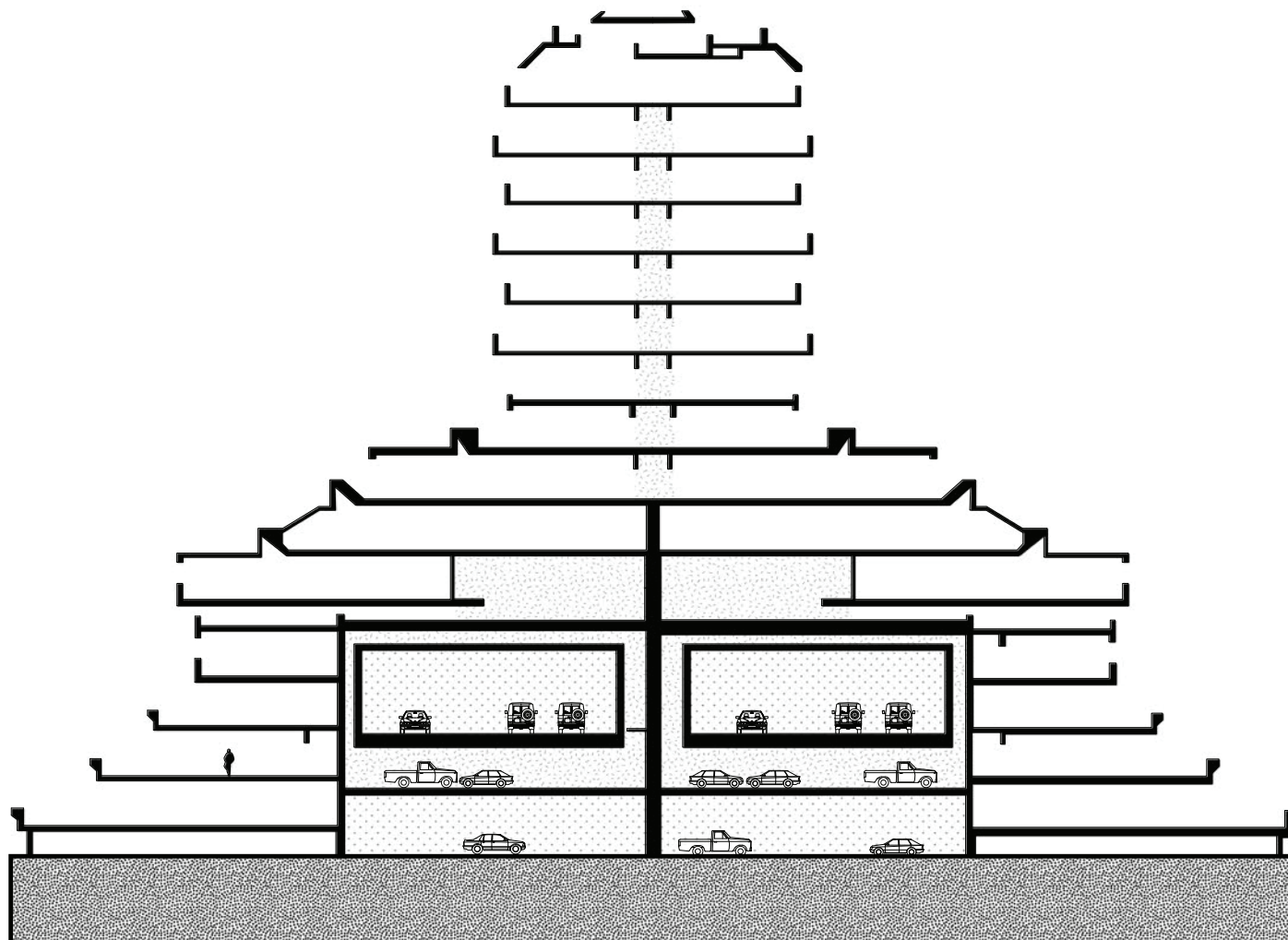
C. Cristophi, L. Mazarrasa (eVolo 2014)





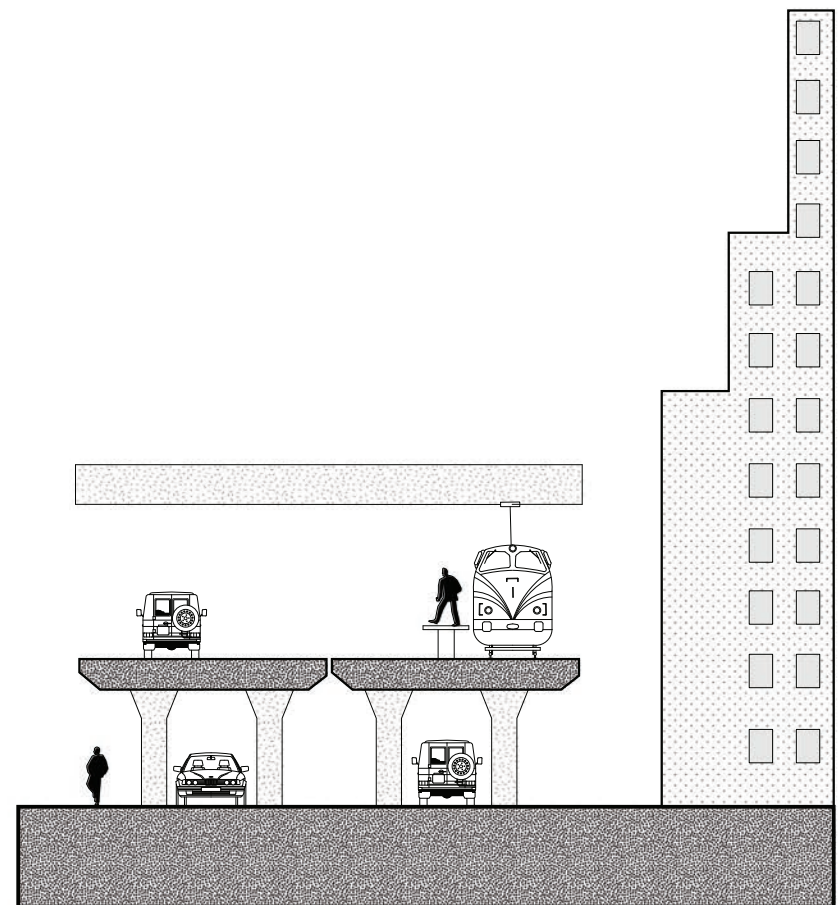
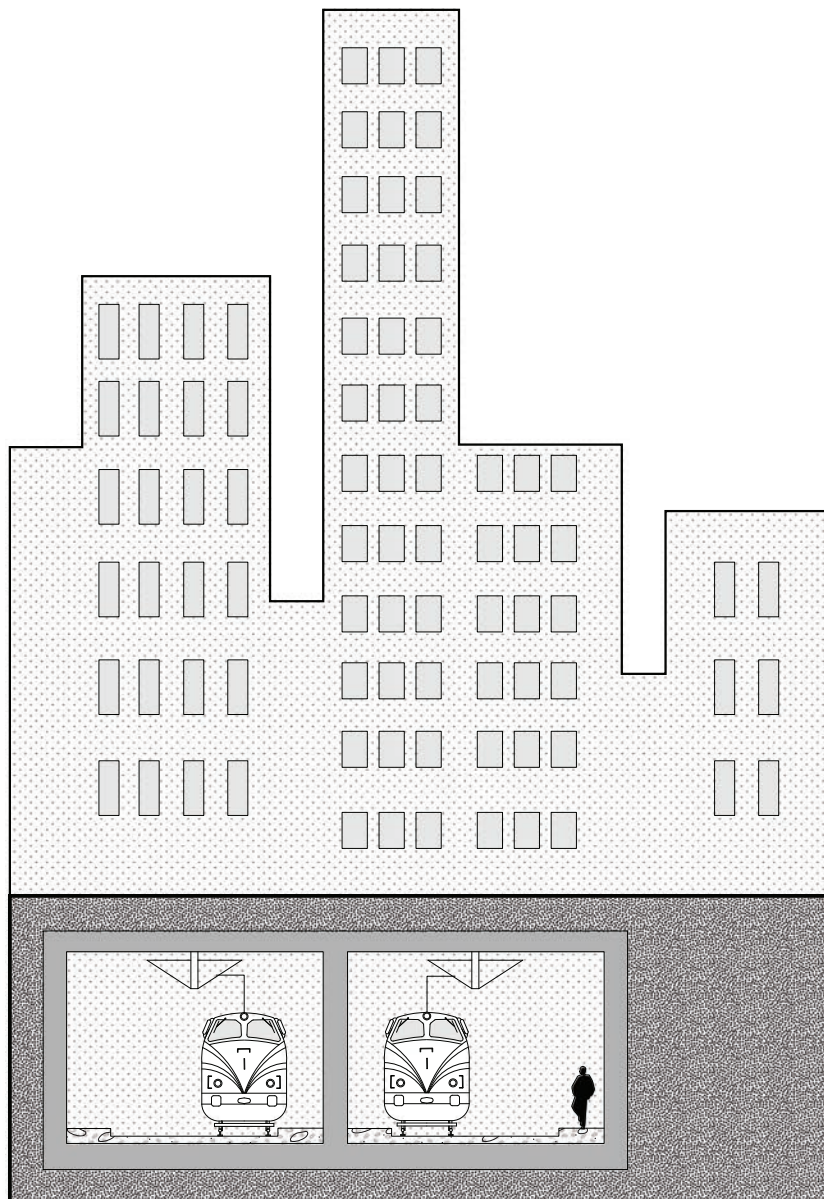
# SCHLANGENBADER STRAßE

Georg Heinrichs



# TRANSPORTATION | BUILT ENVIRONMENT

UNDERGROUND CONSTRUCTION / OVERGROUND CONSTRUCTION



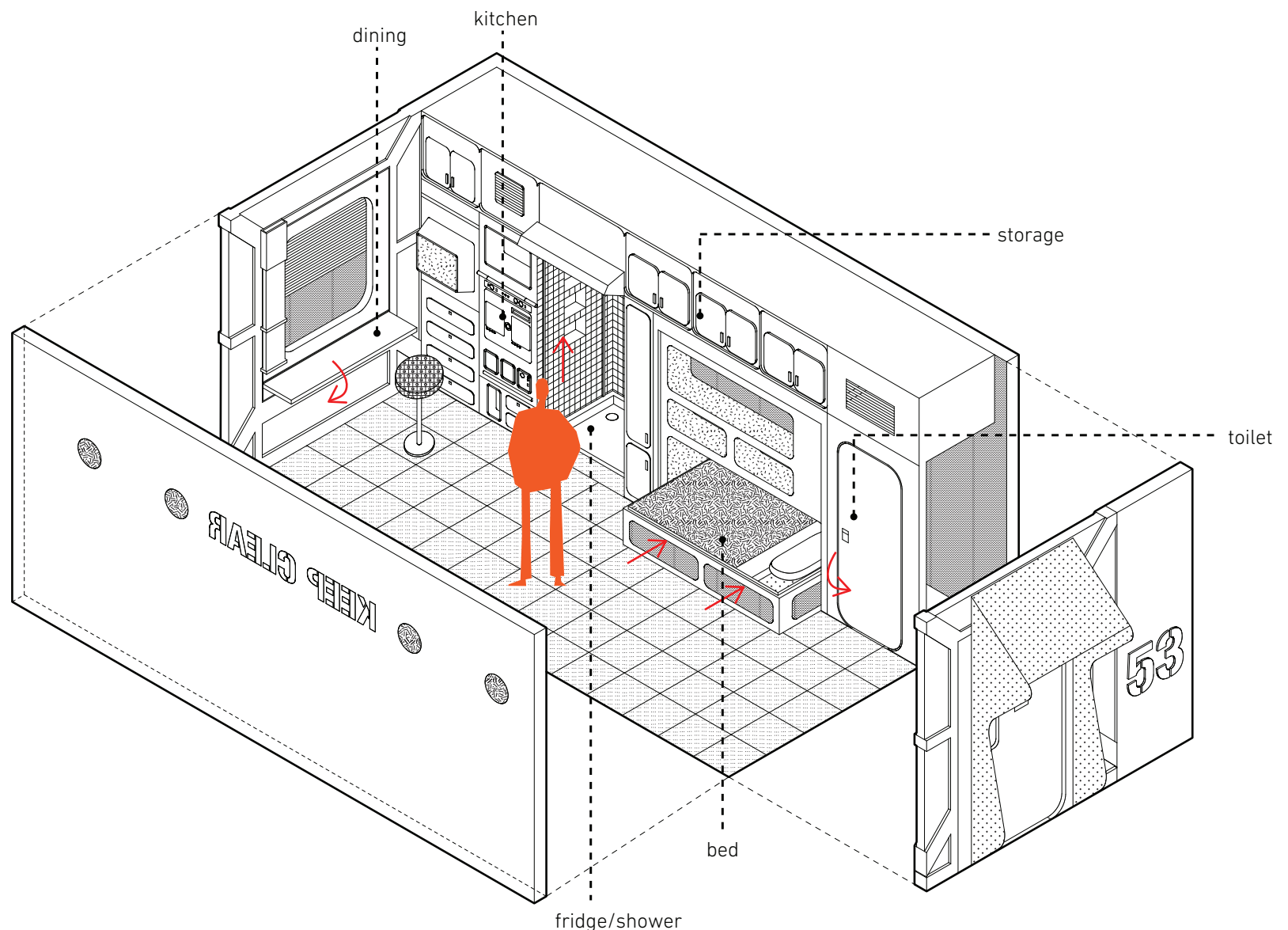


# HOUSING | FILM

With density and urbanization come the consequences of shortage of accessible and affordable spaces for living. There is a re-thinking of how we will live in an efficient manner, dealing with these circumstances in an innovative manner while not sacrificing basic needs for comfort and dwelling.

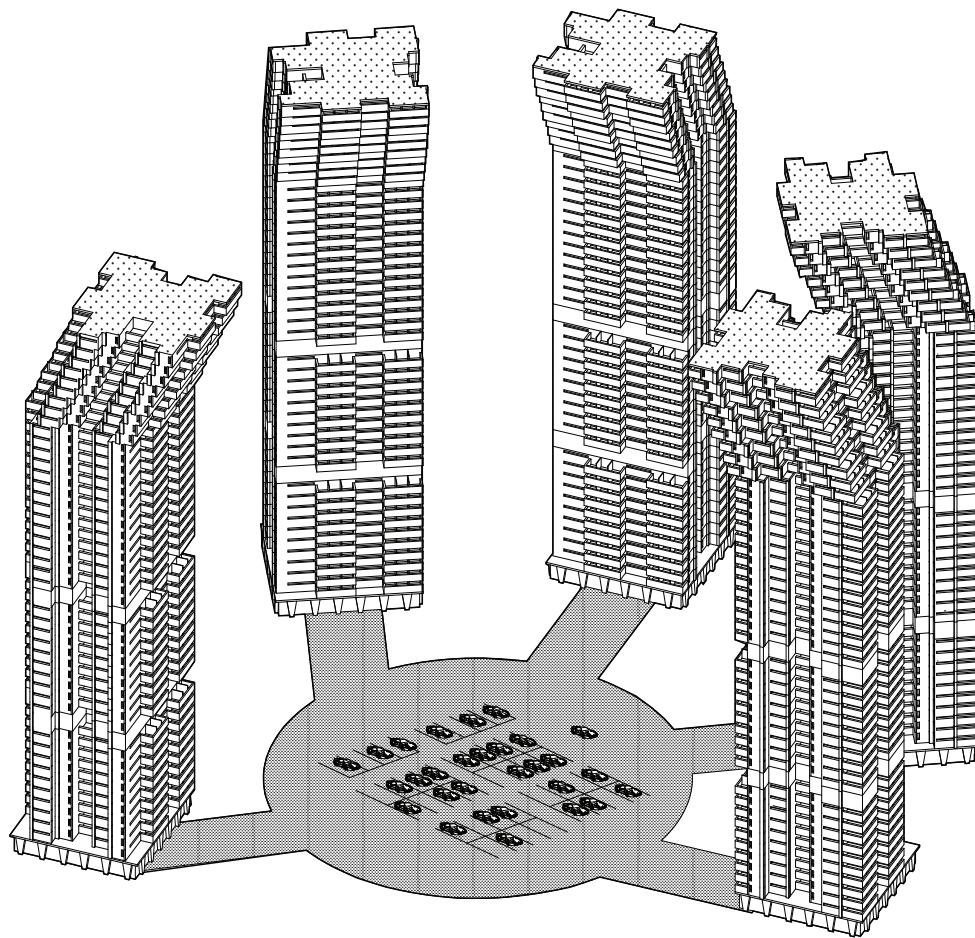
## THE FIFTH ELEMENT (1997)

Dir. Luc Besson



# HIGH RISE (2016)

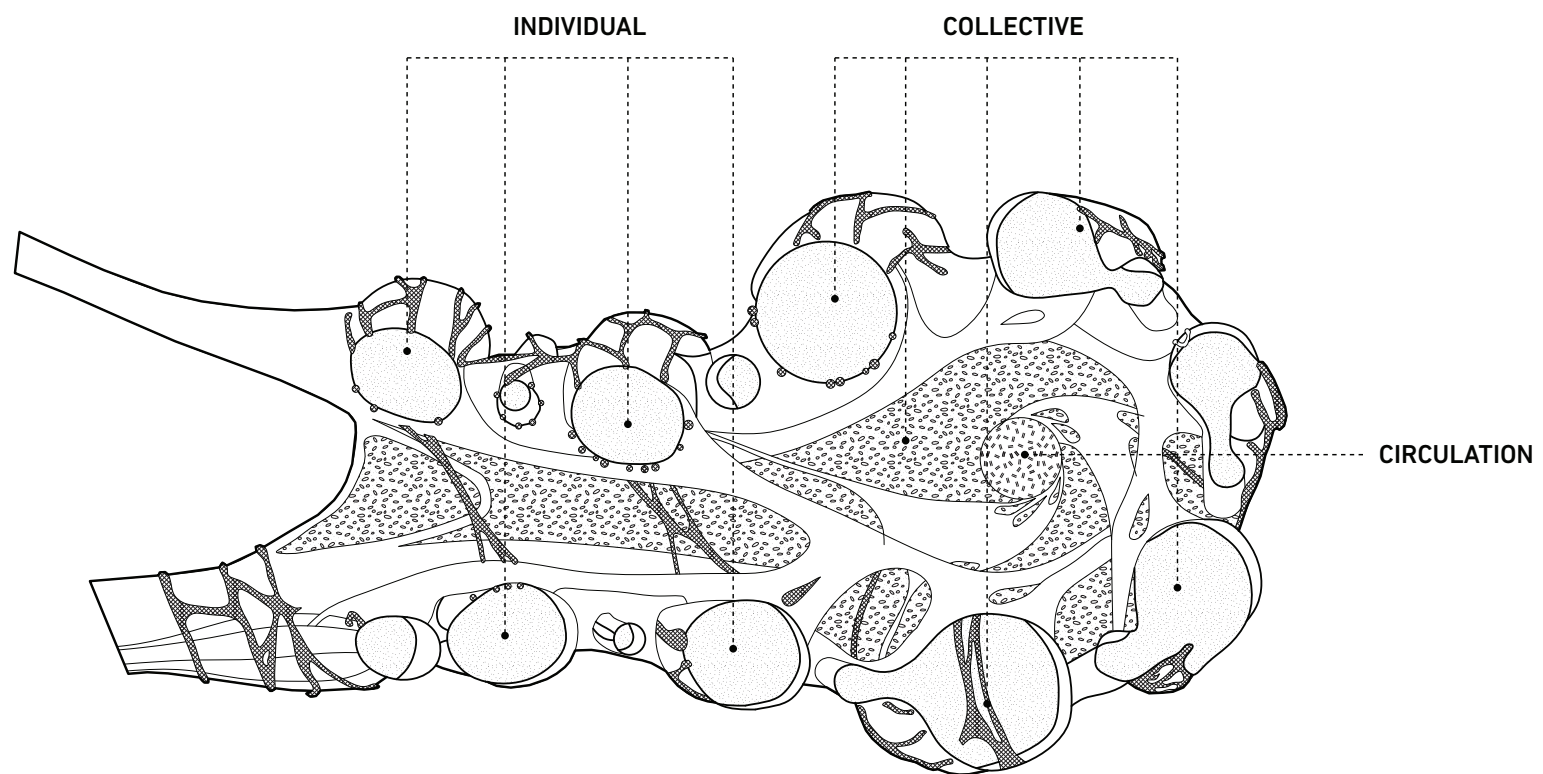
Dir. Ben Wheatley





## URBAN REEF

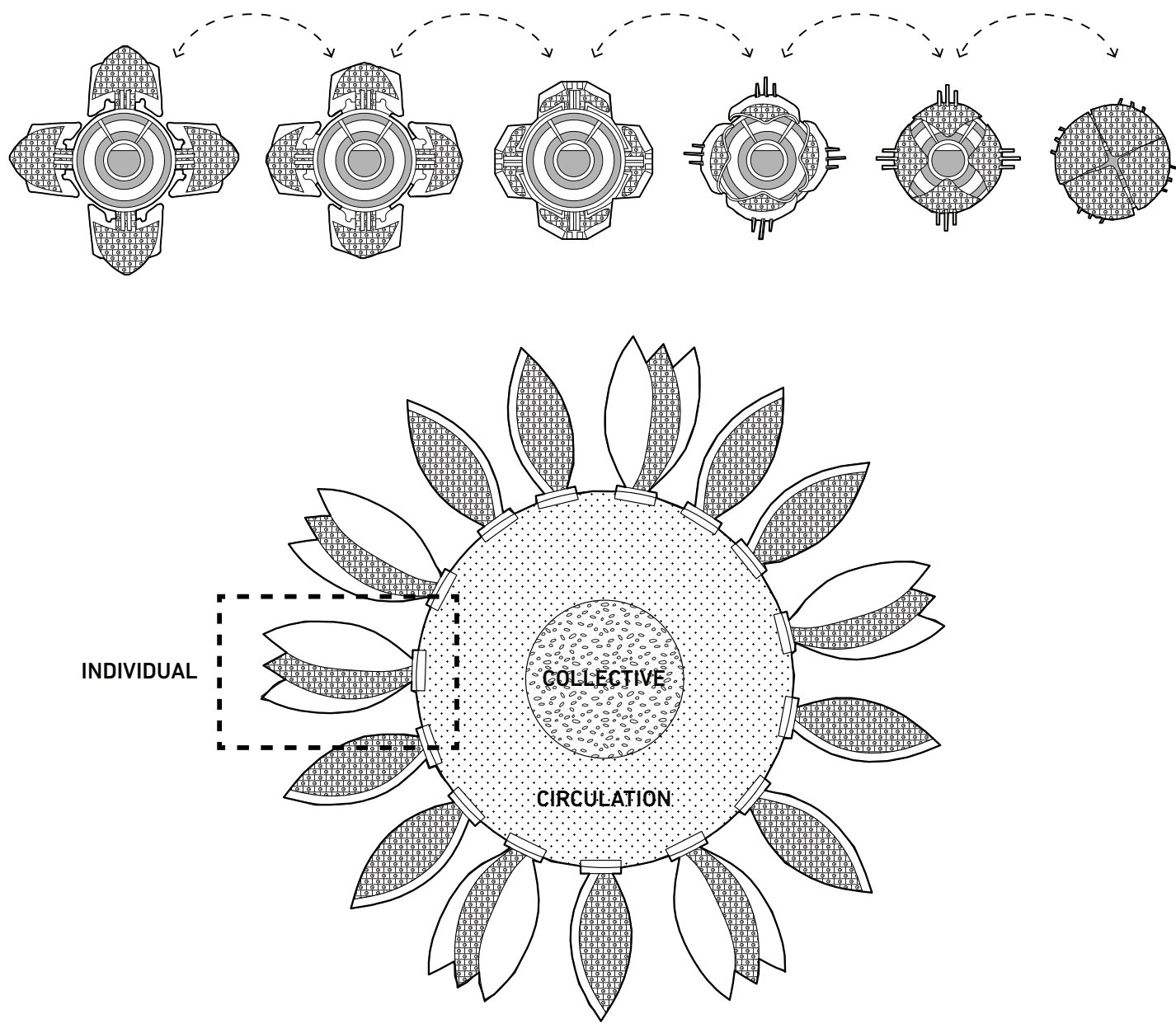
K. Grigoriadis, A. Robles-Palacio, I. Shamma, P. Fereos (eVolo 2010)



# HOUSING | SPECULATIVE

## KINETIC SKYSCRAPER

V. Kopieikin, P. Zabotin (eVolo 2011)

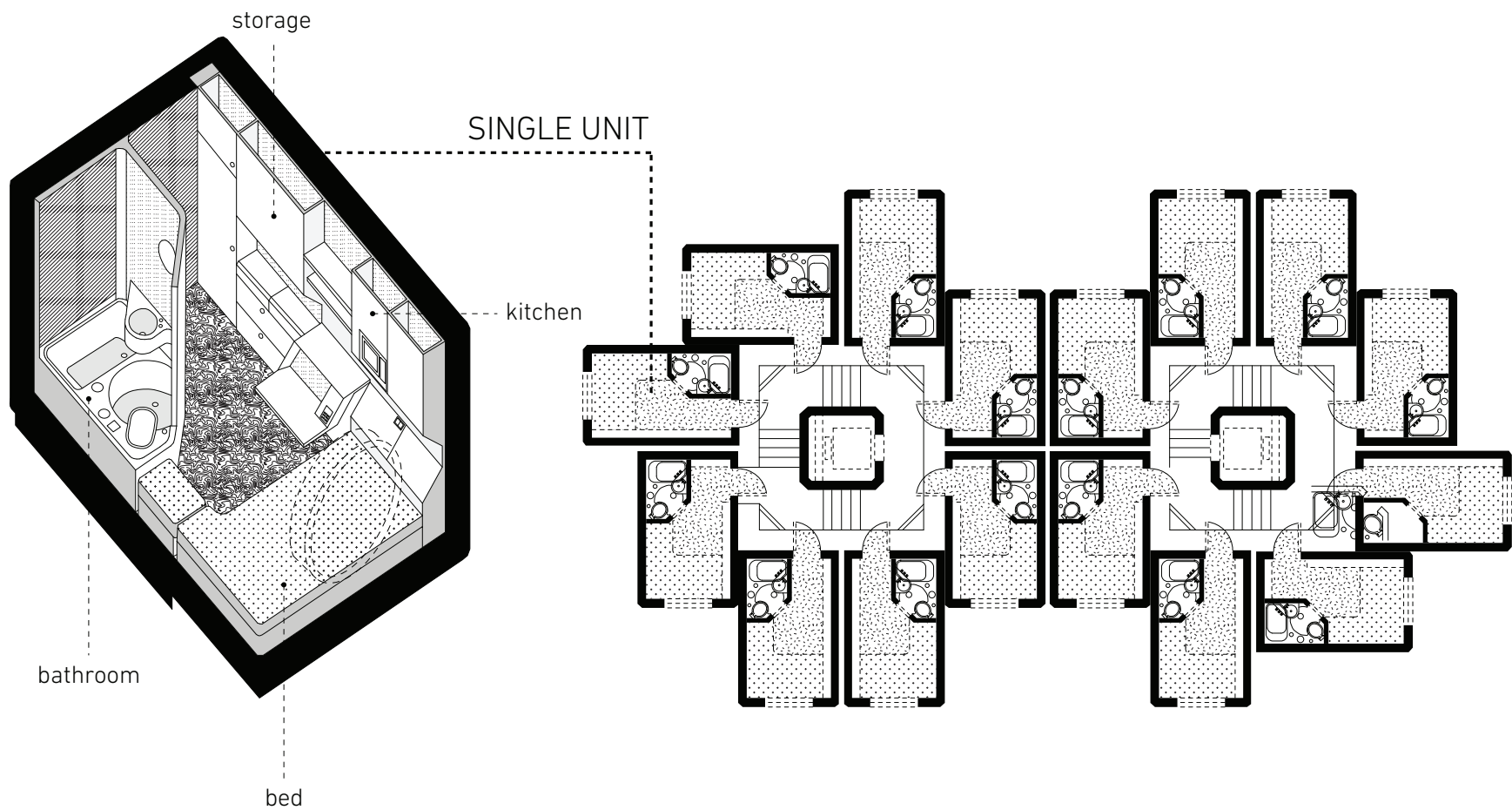




# HOUSING | BUILT ENVIRONMENT

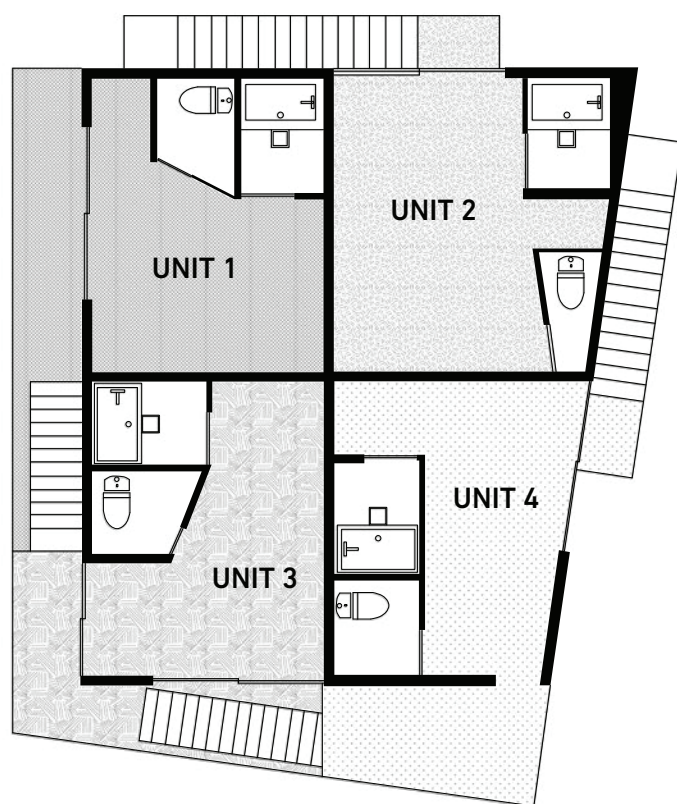
## NAKAGIN CAPSULE TOWER

Kisho Kurokawa

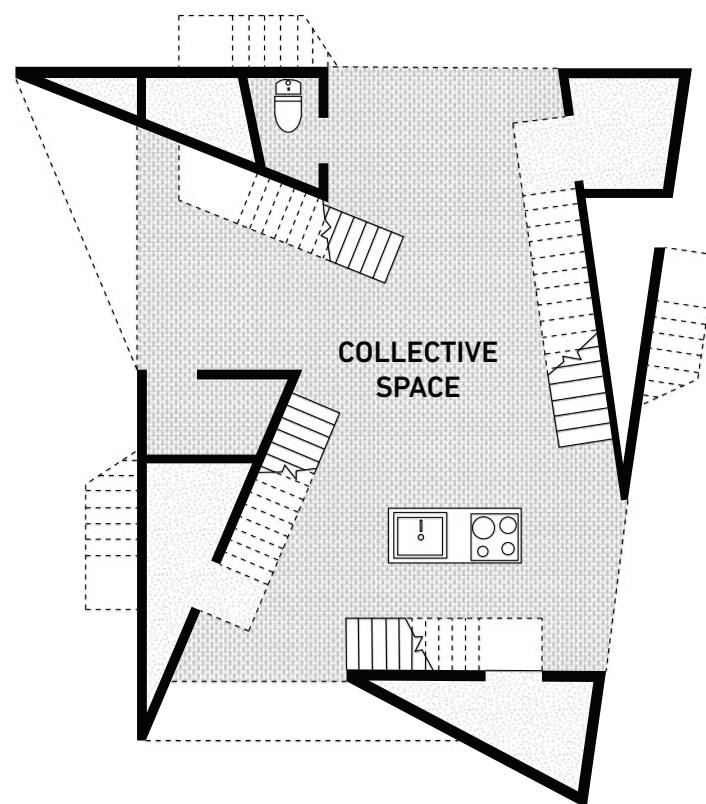


# YOKOHAMA APARTMENT

ON Design Partners



LEVEL 02

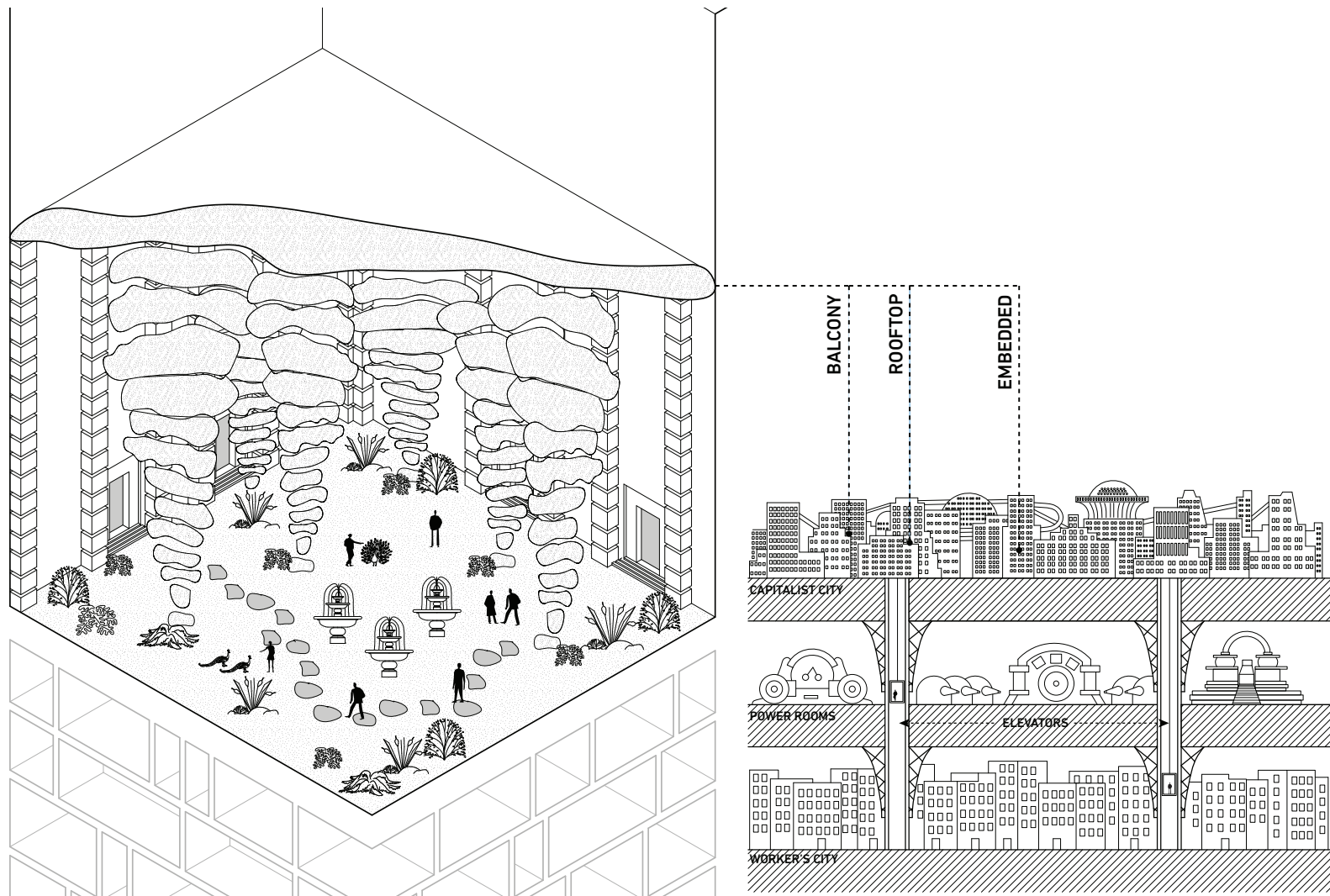


GROUND LEVEL



# METROPOLIS (1927)

Dir. Fritz Lang

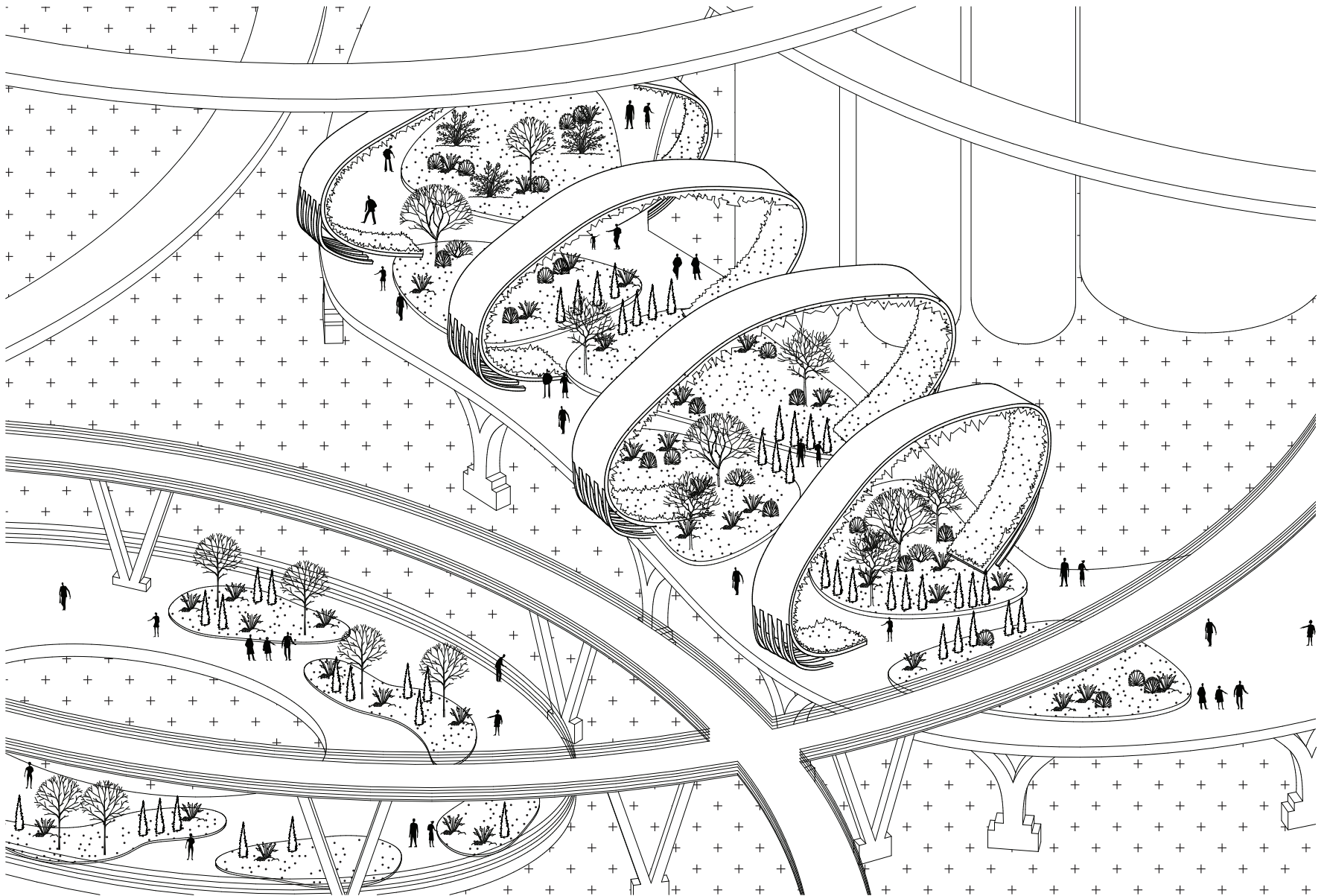


# GREEN SPACE | FILM

Within these incredibly dense and urban fabrics green spaces from public parks to nature in general become a commodity. Integration of these within the verticality becomes a challenge which call for solutions of accessibility, air and light requirements.

## **TOMORROWLAND (2015)**

Dir. Brad Bird

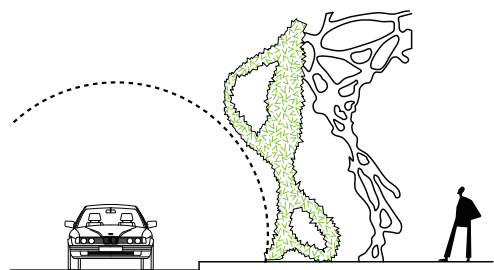




# GREEN SPACE | SPECULATIVE

## HOMEOMORPHIC AGGREGATION

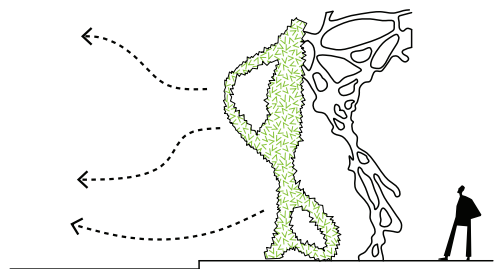
T. Sakairi (eVolo 2008)



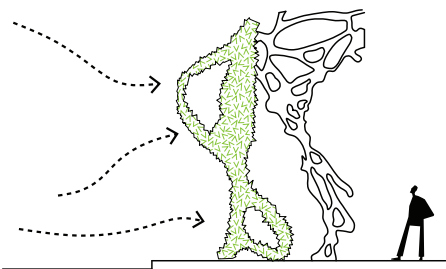
DAMPENS NOISE



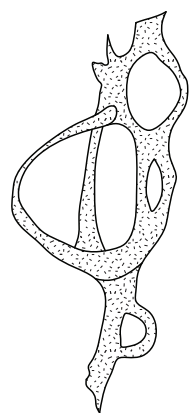
COOLING EFFECT



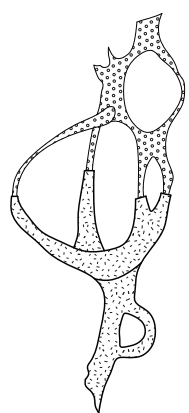
PRODUCES OXYGEN



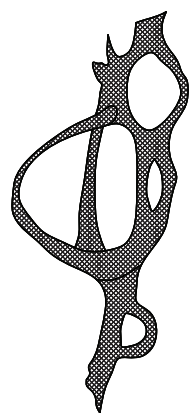
ABSORBS CO2



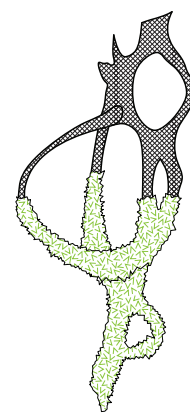
STRUCTURE



IRRIGATION



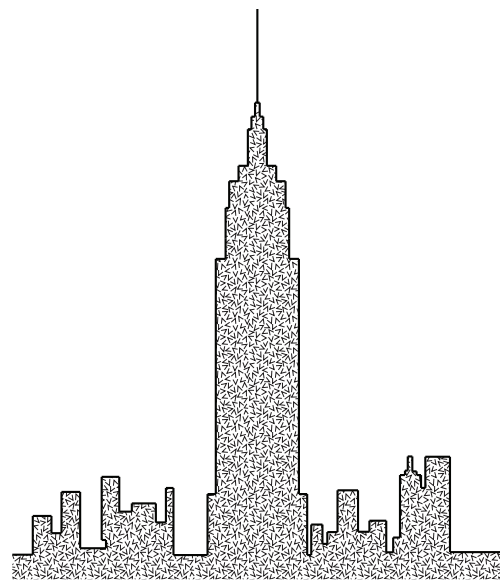
MESH



GREENERY

# RE-SILIENCE

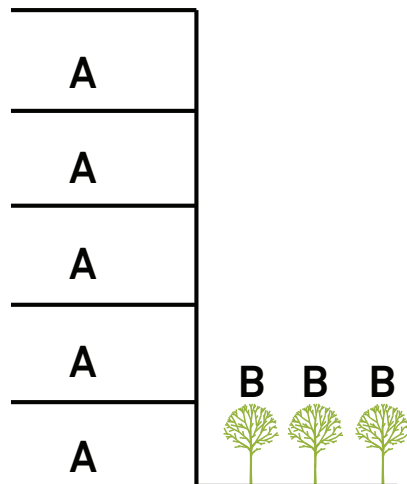
D. Espinosa Figueroa, J. Valenzuela Gonzalez (eVolo 2014)



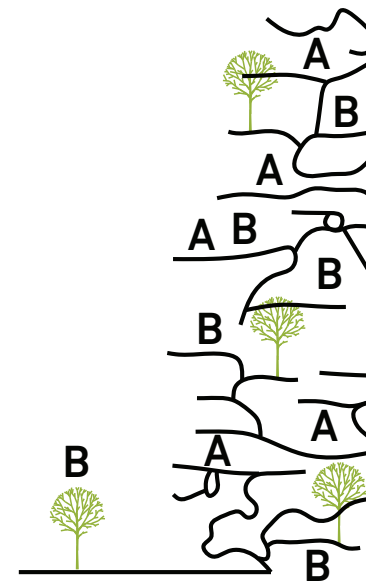
COMMON SKYSCRAPER



RE-SILIENCE SKYSCRAPER



SEPARATION

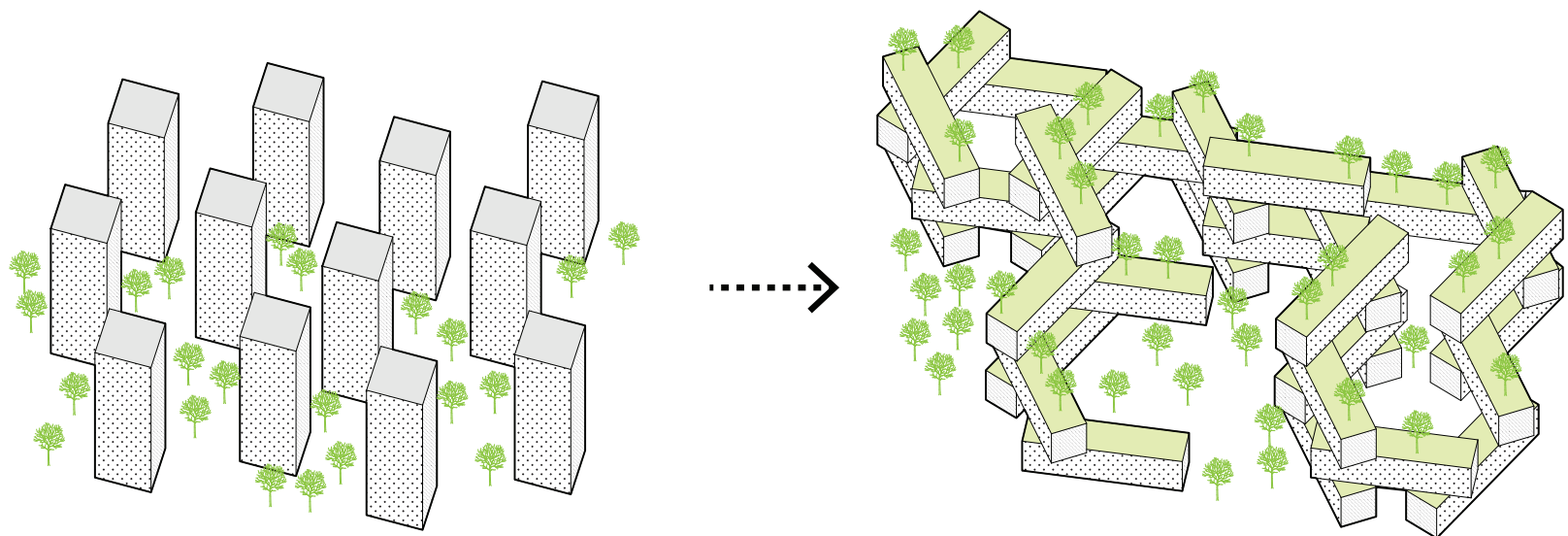


INTEGRATION



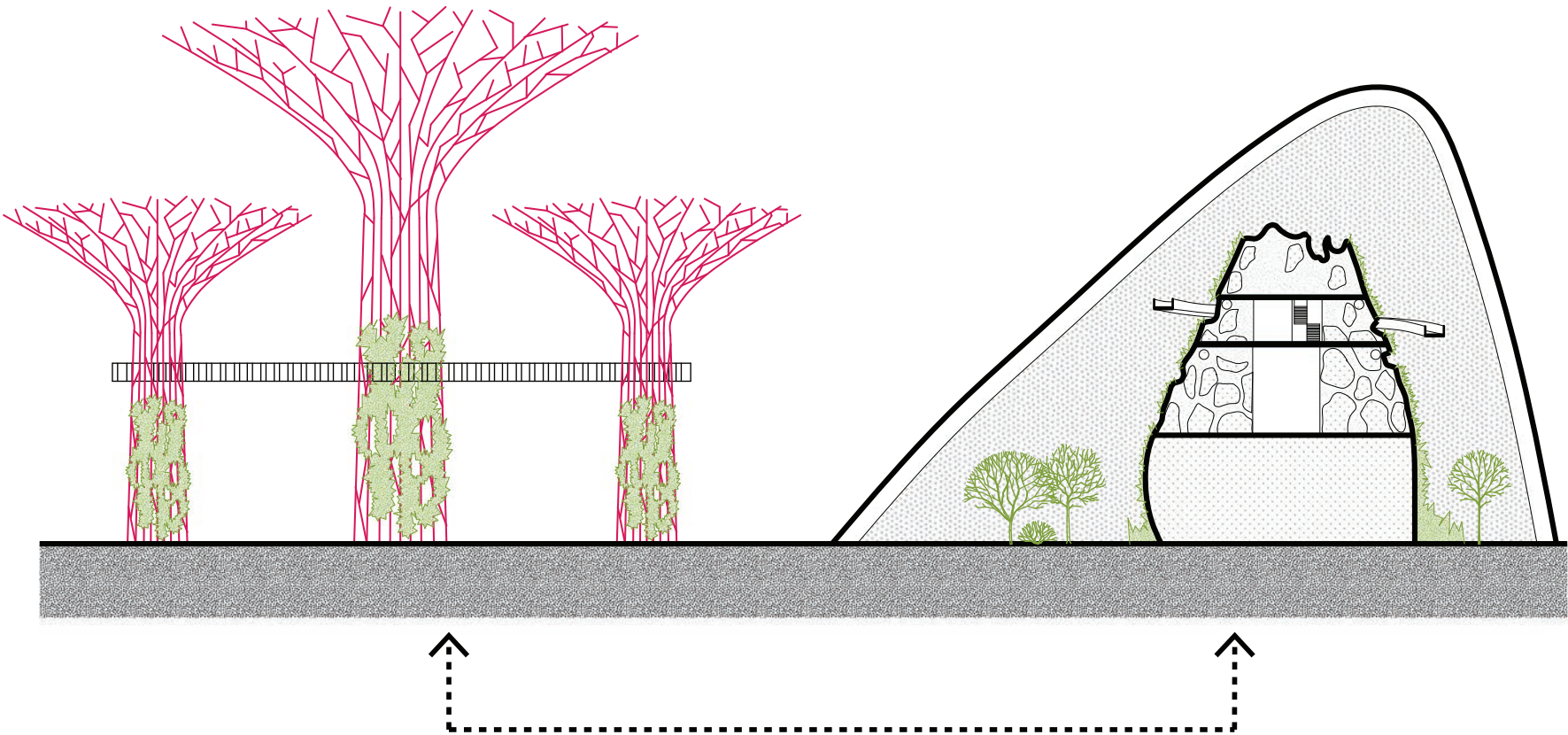
# THE INTERLACE

OMA + Ole Scheeren



# GREEN SPACE | BUILT ENVIRONMENT

GARDENS BY THE BAY  
Atelier Ten, Wilkinson Eyre





# MATERIAL + TECH ADVANCES

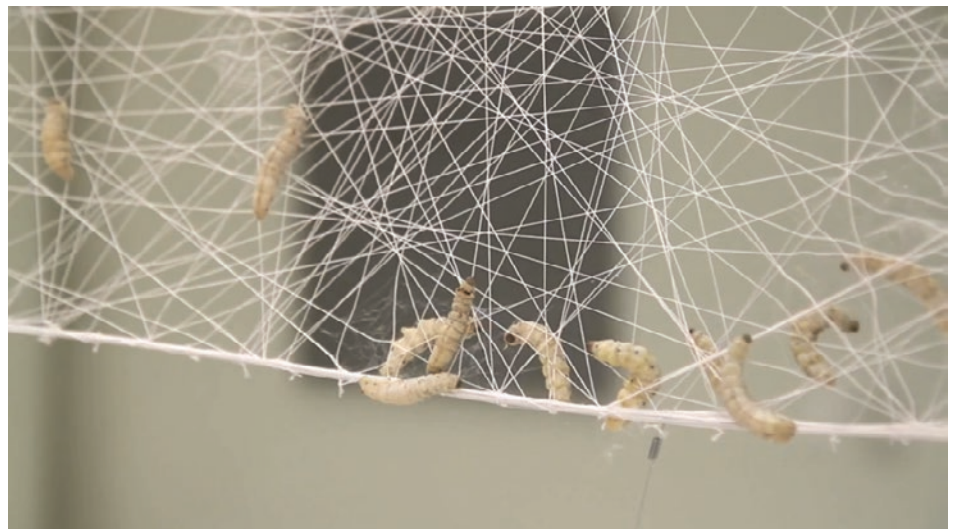
## SITUATION ROOM

Marc Fornes / The Very Many



## SILK PAVILION

MIT Media Lab





## HY-FI

David Benjamin



## ARABESQUE WALL

Michael Hansmeyer







# THE SCRIPT



05



# SCENARIO SPECS



## LOCATION

NAME: The City

YEAR: 2051

GEOGRAPHY: American West

POPULATION: 50,000,000

CLIMATE: Warm, dry summers and mild, wet winters

BASED ON: New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai, Tokyo

## CHARACTERS

- The Old Man

RESIDENT I.D: #3,052,735

D.O.B: 1965

- The Young Woman

RESIDENT I.D #46,522,071

D.O.B: 2026

## PARAMETERS

- Verticality
- Housing
- Transportation
- Green Spaces





### SYNOPSIS:

The story follows a young woman who despite having a daily routine within the overpopulated, extremely developed city, one day misses the train for work. In act of serendipity she meets an enigmatic old man nearby, who reveals to her key fragments of his memory which involve details of The City before, how it changed and evolved in time and space, before mysteriously disappearing.

# THE SCRIPT

## STORY OUTLINE:

### Young Woman P.O.V. (HOUSING)

- She wakes up, describes routine, explains extraordinary conditions / breaking of routine
  - Leaves her unit early in the morning
  - Interaction with neighbors in collective space while getting ready for work

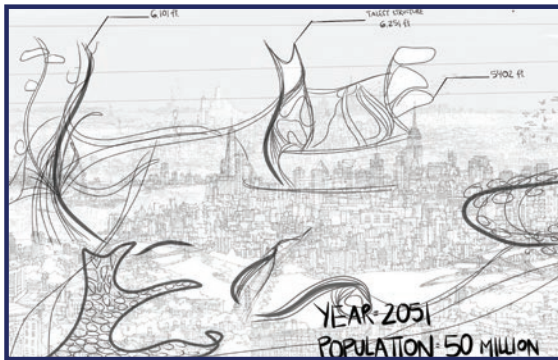
### (TRANSPORTATION)

- Goes to catch the train
  - Train arrives to station but it's too crowded
  - As train leaves, reveals green space/park far behind with old man standing on it overlooking
  - She becomes intrigued by the old man, and decides to skip work and go meet the man

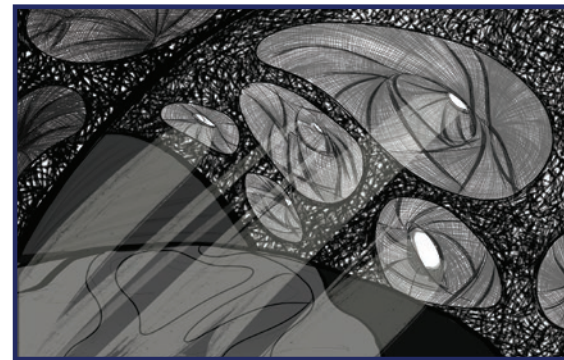
### (GREEN/PUBLIC)

- On her walk she describes pedestrian walkways / bridges / access to these green clusters throughout the city. She arrives to the park / meets old guy
  - Never met anyone who's lived in The City for that long
  - After asking if him about his earlier memory about The City, she describes what the old man reveals to her
- He saw the city grow before his eyes, reveals slow development and previous issues (housing shortage, traffic congestion)
  - He once visited the city's border / edge, now nonexistent
- After reflecting on this, she turns to ask man what he thought of the changes / if he was happier, etc to find man has mysteriously disappeared

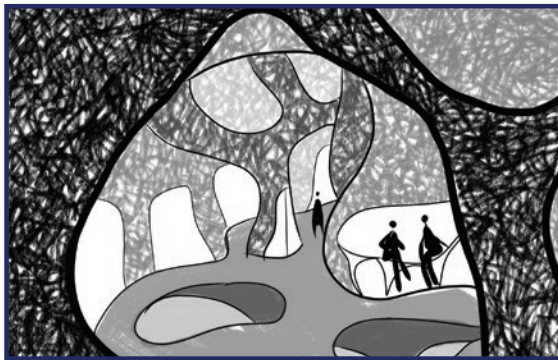




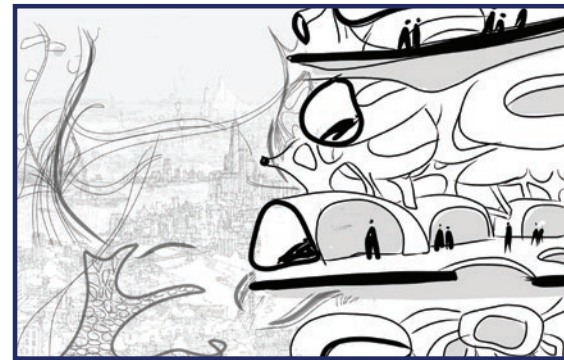
1. Establishing The City. As the camera pans, data is overlaid into the aerial (year, stats, etc)



2. We see the individual pod from the character's P.O.V, with the membrane opening as light comes in.



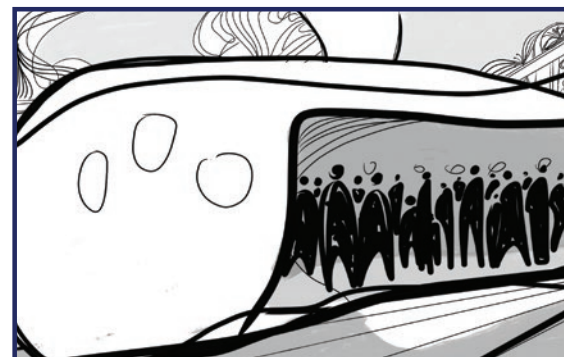
3. The camera zooms out to reveal pod unit connection to collective areas in section.



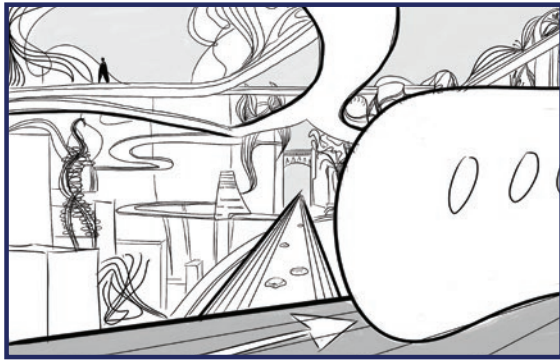
4. As camera zooms even further out, we see the entire housing network and how they connect to the "street". Data is shown throughout.



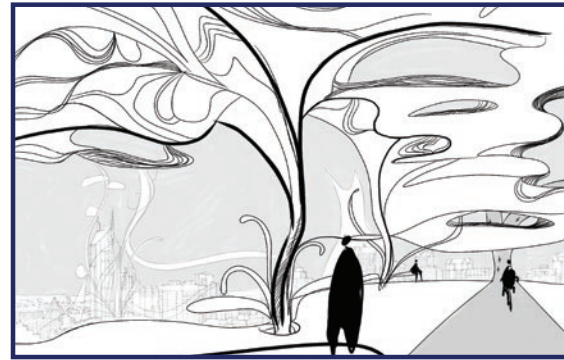
5. Back to first person view. We follow path/ lift to arrive to public transport hub / station.



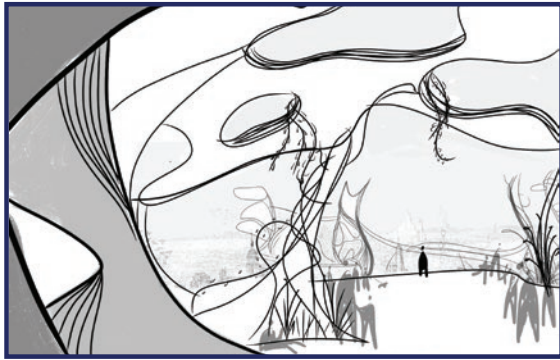
6. Car arrives and is too full. Data is constantly embedded into images.



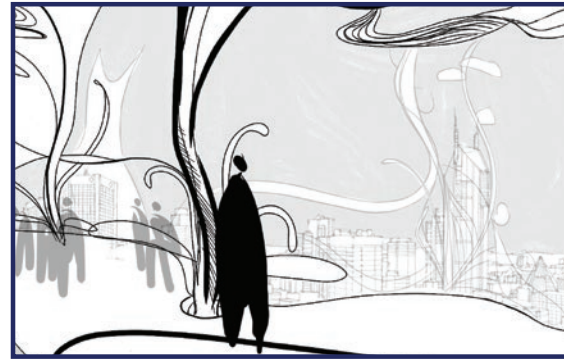
7. Car leaves, revealing behind a man standing at the edge of an elevated park.



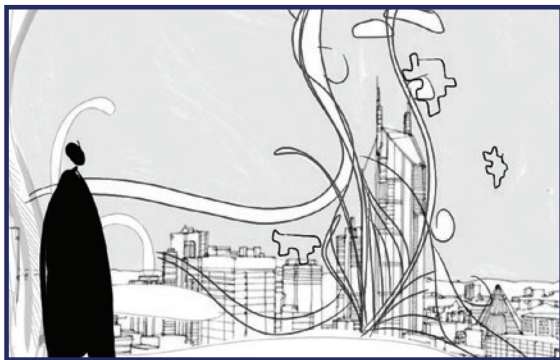
8. Follow pedestrian path towards park. Camera goes from eye level up to reveal height difference.



9. Arrival into the park. Passing through threshold / structure reveals openness of space, focusing / coming into man at the end.



10. Different angle of park. See the city beyond. People slowly fade out, leaving only man.



11. Shift focus into city. Glitches of parts and pieces reveal contrast, before/after condition.

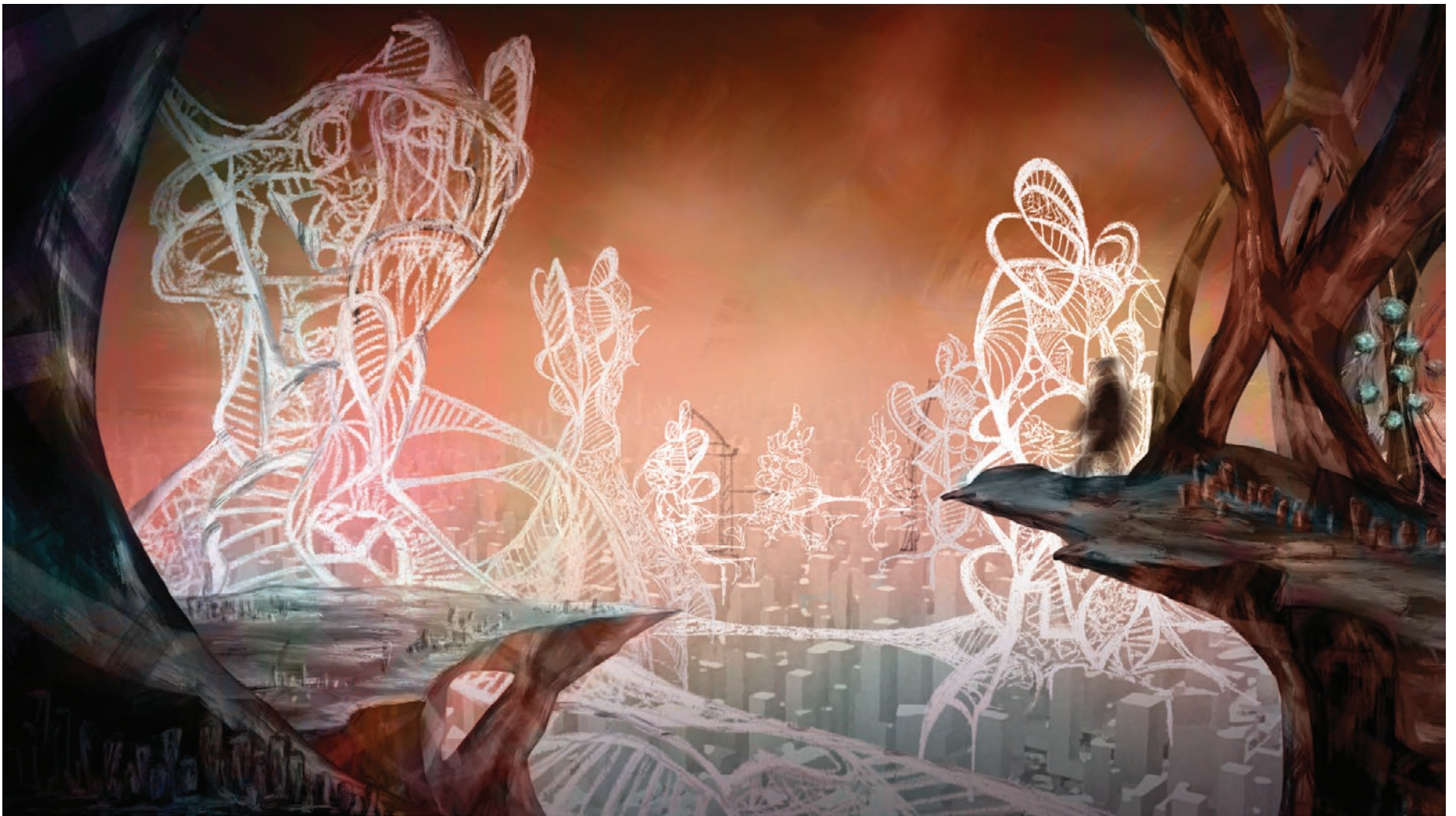


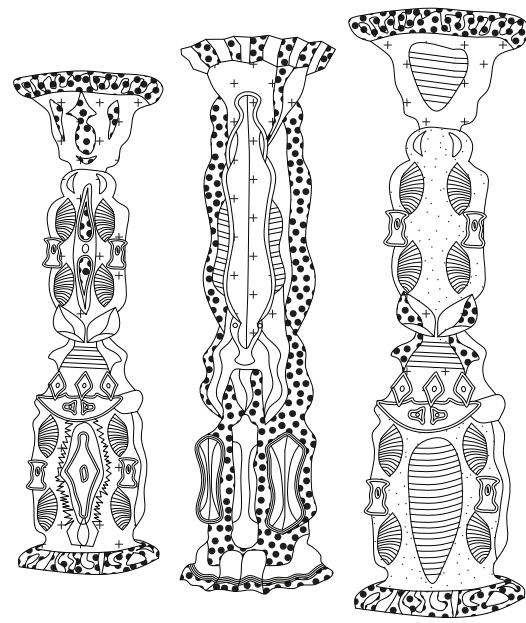
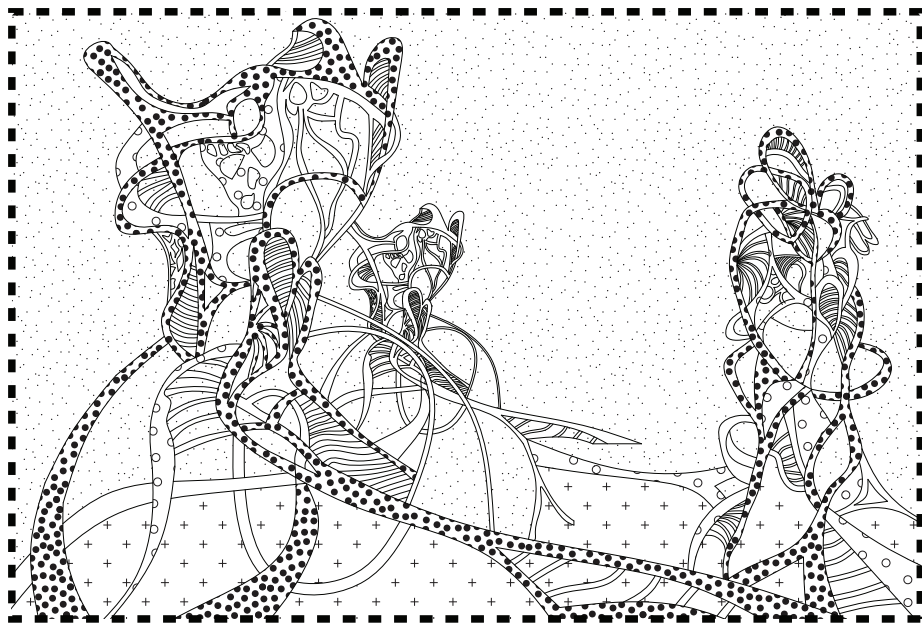
12. Back into reality. Man is nowhere to be seen, mass of people moving and active city is back.



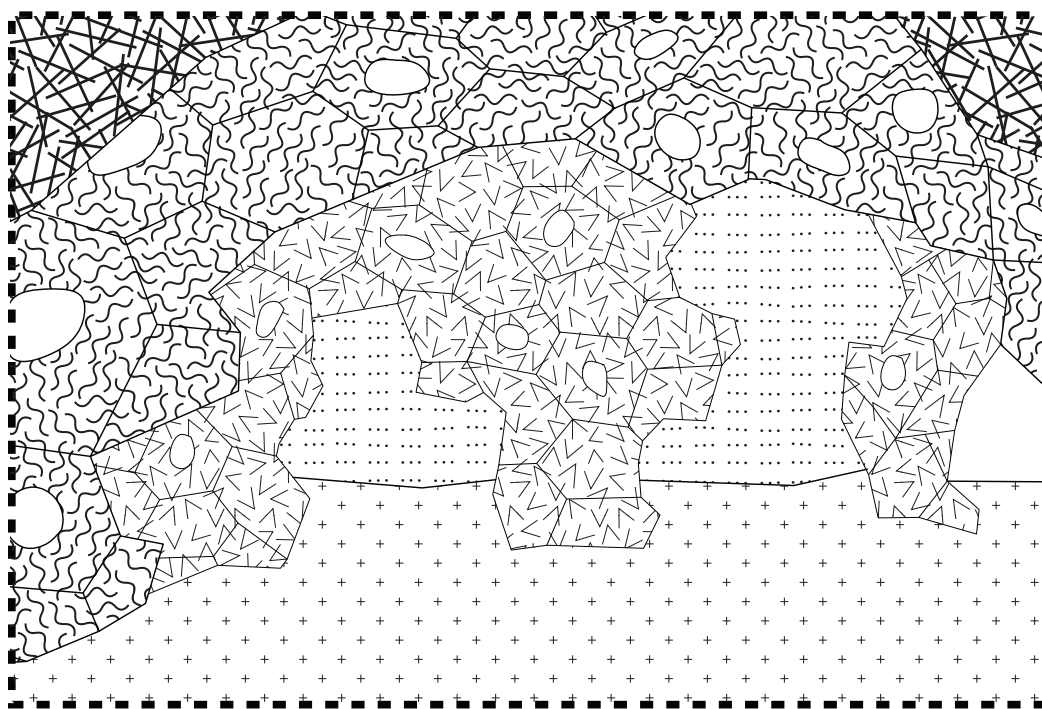
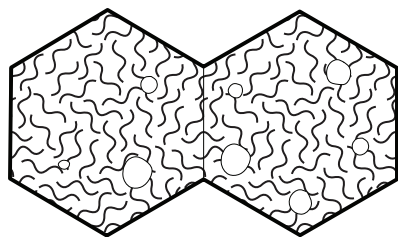
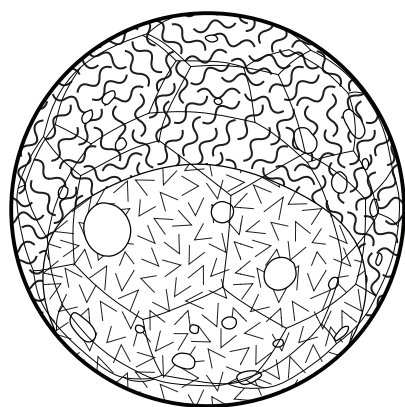
# CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

VERTICALITY + 3D PRINTING TECH



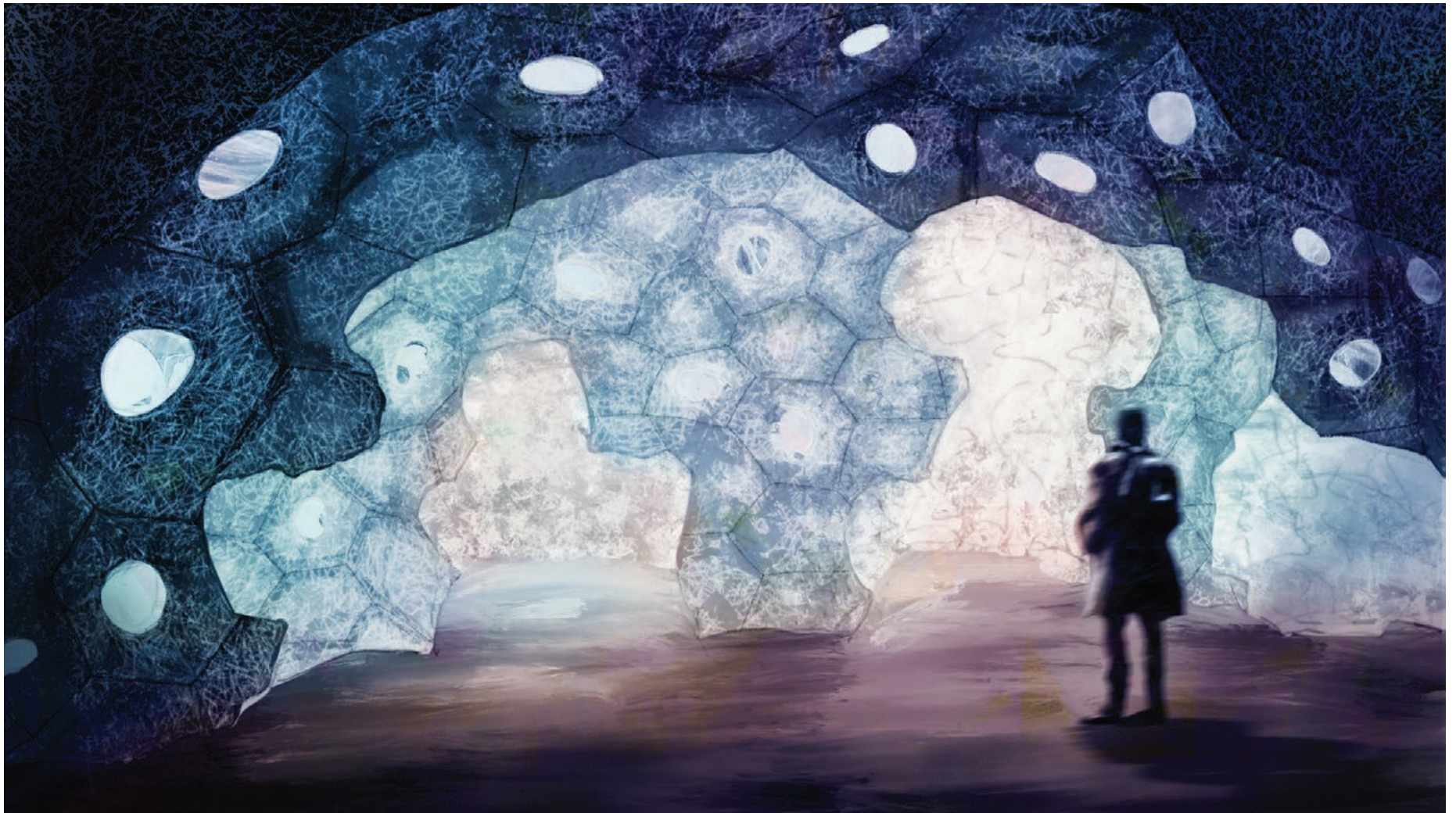






# CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

HOUSING + CNC SILK

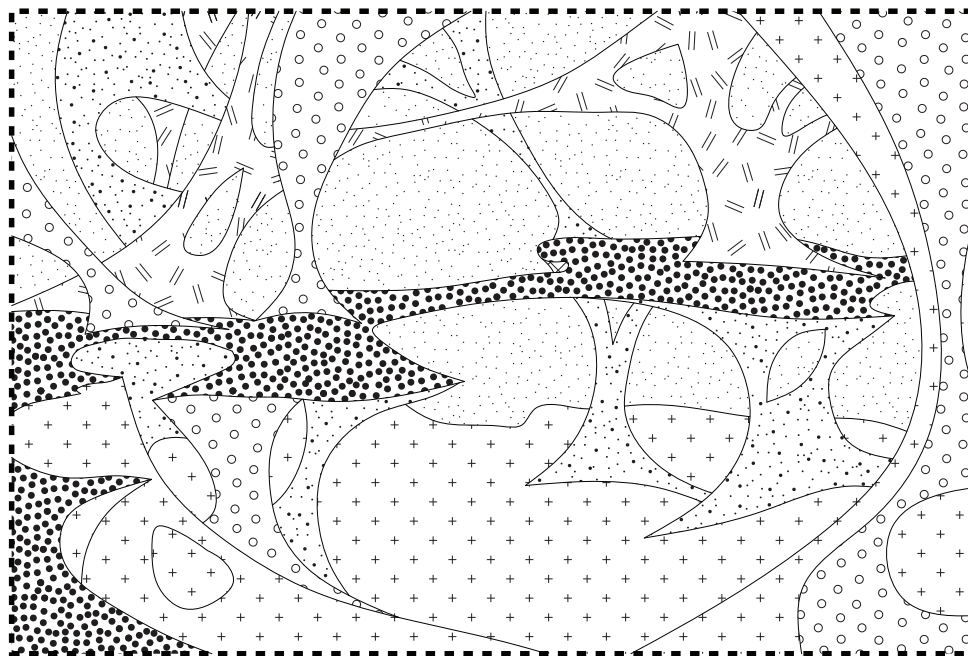
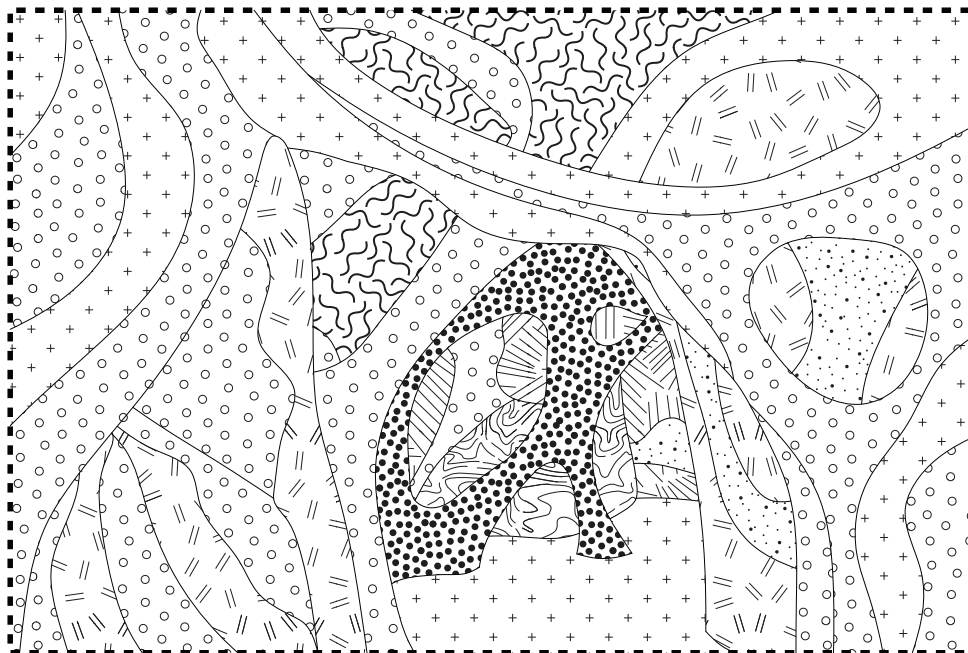




# CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

GREEN SPACE + SELF SUPPORTING SHELL STRUCTURES







I've been living in The City for as long as I can remember. Every day I wake up, get ready, and go to work like millions of others. But that day was different. I left my unit early in the morning, as soon as the first light of day started to filter in.

During breakfast I introduced myself to the new neighbors who had moved into a couple units above the week before. A very friendly couple, so much that I lost track of time while talking on and on about our neighborhood and recommending my favorite restaurants. By the time I was able to finally break out of the conversation and run to the station, the car was already full. As it departed and I debated in my mind whether to wait the couple of minutes left until the next one or spend the extra money on the express line, I saw an old man standing by himself at the edge of a nearby park. He was acting in such an unusual way, seeming to just stare into the distance without even noticing the awakening city around him, that I instantly made up my mind and decided to walk to the park instead.

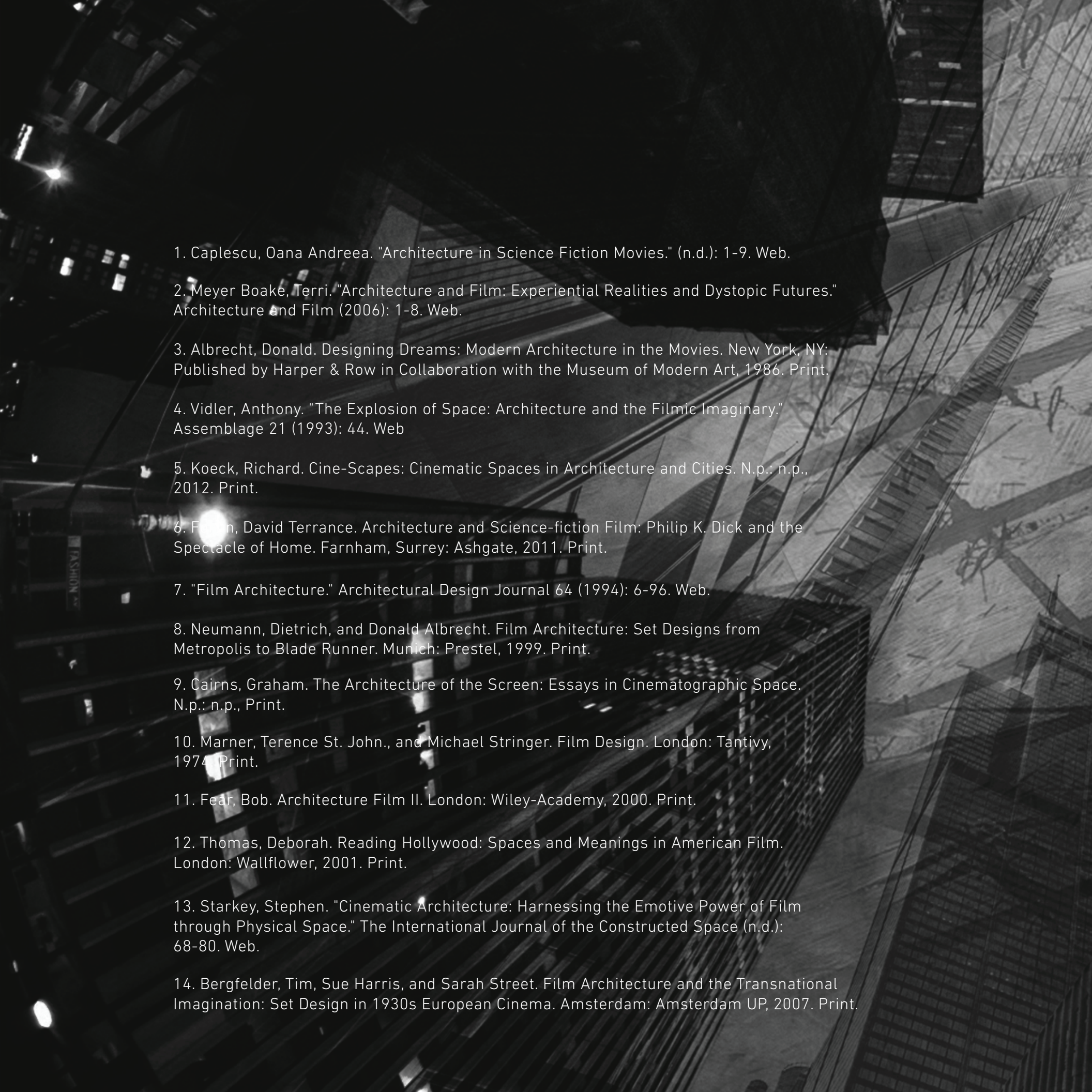
I had never been to this park before. In fact, as I walked the pathways that lead to the lift that would take me to that level, I noticed how unfamiliar I was to it all. I realized that maybe walking wasn't such a bad thing after all, not when it involved these views and so few others around. A nice break in a city where you're constantly surrounded by thousands.

After walking for around 20 minutes, I finally arrived to the park. As I approached the old man who hadn't moved at all, he spun around slowly and met me with a smile. "I moved into the city 75 years ago today" was the first thing he said. I've never met anyone who's lived in The City for so long. I couldn't contain my curiosity, so I asked him the first question that popped into my mind: what do you remember?. He smiled again, and started to walk, making a small gesture to indicate I follow him. And so, as we walked around the park, he started to slowly describe the few fragments that he was able to recollect. He recalled the city growing in front of his own eyes, like some organic being, living and breathing like any of us. It started small, he said, the formations. Small insertions here and there, nothing like what The City is today.

[...]

Our memories, he told me as I stared into the city, are such fleeting things. We collect bits and pieces of information, that we gather and store for as long as we can. With time they slowly decay, get altered, adapt in the same way we ourselves change. Such fleeting things, sometimes they can't be trusted. "Do you remember being happier back then?" I asked him finally. But when he didn't answer, I turned around again to find the man was nowhere to be seen.



- 
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